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New York

President: Mr. Han Seung-soo ..... (Republic of Korea)

The meeting was called to order at 9.05 a.m.

Address by Mr. Tommy Remengesau, Jr., President of the Republic of Palau

The President: The Assembly will first hear an address by the President of the Republic of Palau.

Mr. Tommy Remengesau, Jr., President of the Republic of Palau, was escorted into the General Assembly Hall.

The President: On behalf of the General Assembly, I have the honour to welcome to the United Nations His Excellency Mr. Tommy Remengesau, Jr., President of the Republic of Palau, and to invite him to address the Assembly.

President Remengesau: Let me begin by conveying my deepest sympathy and condolences to the families and relatives of the victims of American Airlines flight 587, which crashed in this great city two days ago, exactly two months and one day after the 11 September terrorist attack. The people of New York are once again being put to the test, and once again they will come out of this tragedy more resolved and determined, under the leadership of Mayor Giuliani and Governor Pataki. While we pray for the victims and their families, let us also pray that the crash, as tragic as it was, will prove to be an accident and not an act of terrorism.

In the wake of an unfathomable, barbarous act of terror against a civilian population made up of citizens from nations around the globe, we gather together in unprecedented unity. We are united in our sorrow over the losses arising from 11 September — the loss of lives, the loss of friends and loved ones, the loss of livelihoods and the loss of innocence, for want of a better word. We are united in our condemnation of the horrific acts perpetrated by an isolated group of extremists who have no respect for human life. We are united in our resolve that those responsible for the atrocities of 11 September, and those who support them, are a cancer in the body of nations — a systemic blight which extends beyond the individual perpetrators and which must be utterly eradicated, lest it return and spread.

At the same time, we are united in our conviction that their evil cannot be allowed to force us to abandon respect for human rights and adherence to the rule of law, which are fundamental principles of this Organization. We are united in our recognition that, for all their claims to holiness, those responsible for these criminal acts of terror bear no legitimate claim to any civilized religion and certainly do not represent the noble and honourable beliefs of Islam. We are united in our understanding that the peoples of Afghanistan are also victims of the corruption and ill-fated control of their Government by these criminals and their supporters, as well as in our desire to assist in improving the quality of life of the people of Afghanistan. In all these things and more, we are united to a degree that would have been unthinkable before 11 September.

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This new spirit of cooperation reflects the most positive feature of globalization — the feature which pro-globalization factions do not often put forward and anti-globalization forces never consider. It is the only feature of globalization that Pacific island countries such as Palau can see as being truly and inherently positive — a feature that the Pacific island countries have recognized among themselves for decades. That feature is the acknowledgement that, ultimately, there is only one system in which we exist, and the related understanding that any act or condition within that system affects each of us, although in varying ways and degrees. In such a system, problems are best addressed through coalition-building and a consensus-driven approach, a process of give and take, involving the widest possible range of participants. We see proof of this as the world continues to cooperate in responding to the 11 September attacks against humanity.

As I have said, in this new spirit of cooperation, the process of decision-making and the implementation of those decisions must be as open and participatory as possible. This is especially true in the light of the need to weave together military, financial, law enforcement, trade, intelligence-gathering and foreign aid issues. In these troubled times, it simply makes no sense to isolate a proven ally in the fight against terrorism. Yet that is what is happening. The Republic of China on Taiwan, which could and should be a very valuable asset in these and other cooperative actions, is significantly restricted in the role it can play because it has been barred from membership in this body. In fact, it is the only nation in the world which has no voice in this Organization.

Not only is the exclusion of Taiwan contrary to the fundamental, inclusive principles of the United Nations, but on a more pragmatic level it compromises security in Asia and the Pacific. Lacking a neutral forum for the non-violent, diplomatic resolution of any disputes it might have with the People's Republic of China, the Republic of China on Taiwan is at a great disadvantage in maintaining stable and peaceful relations in the region. It is simply counterproductive, from either a practical or a political viewpoint, to exclude from this body a peaceful, democratically governed, economically vibrant nation which embraces human rights and plays a major role in other international organizations.

Similarly, it makes no sense, in this new global system, to ignore an entire bloc of nations because of perceptions left over from an earlier, colonial-era world. Yet the Pacific island countries are still being marginalized in the various United Nations bodies and processes. It is time to recognize that the Pacific island countries are unique entities, island countries with distinct traditions, cultures, needs, interests and concerns and are not merely the leftovers of colonialism. It is time to recognize that they are among the youngest nations of the world, with special requirements for assistance in assuming their proper place in the global arena. Those needs, interests and concerns are often overlooked against the larger backdrop of the Asia-Pacific Group in the United Nations. It is time to change that; to deal more fully with the Pacific island countries as such, rather than as an afterthought tagged onto Asia.

Resolutions have been put forward which could correct the erroneous exclusion of the Republic of China on Taiwan, pave the way to providing a properly expanded role for the Pacific island countries as such, and produce greater cooperation and broader support in all the key works of the United Nations. Now is the time for the membership to adopt those resolutions in recognition of the need for full participation of all peoples in the global events unfolding now and sure to develop in the foreseeable future.

Moreover, it is equally important in this new globalization and world order that the most important organ of the United Nations, the Security Council, be reorganized and restructured to reflect true representation of this Organization. While we commend and applaud the five permanent members of the Security Council for their efforts and contributions to world peace and security, the time has come for this body to consider the inclusion of several Member States as permanent members of the Security Council. Japan, among few others, has certainly reached the level and capacity to be one of the permanent members of the Security Council. In this respect, we applaud the recent decision of the Japanese Government to send support forces to the United States-led coalition war against international terrorism.

Finally, if it can be said that any good came from the abominations of 11 September, it would be this: countries of the world that gave little thought to engagement and cooperation in a larger, global system are now fully engaged and working side by side with countries to which they were formerly antagonistic or to which they gave only passing thought, at best. This

new perspective can and should be applied to respond to another global attack, one that is even more basic than terrorism and will remain a threat to humanity after the criminals of 11 September are brought to justice.

This threat arises from the attack on our own ecosystem through desertification, through the reduction in global biodiversity and through global warming and sea-level rise, all resulting from human activities. These attacks, infinitely less dramatic than those of 11 September, are nonetheless equally systemic in nature and equally threatening to us all. It is time to apply the same new understanding of global dynamics, so forcefully driven home on 11 September, to our environment.

We applaud and are very much encouraged by the developments of the recently concluded seventh session of the Conference of the Parties to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change in Morocco. To that end, I want to repeat my oft-stated call for all nations to finalize negotiations on, sign, ratify and implement the Kyoto Protocol as soon as possible. Just as we must now directly confront the effects of transnational acts of terror, we must now directly confront the environmental consequences of our own actions. Delay on either matter is unacceptable and will only further compromise our well-being.

For perhaps the first time in its glorious history, the phrase "United Nations" literally describes this Organization. While we remain shocked, saddened and deeply offended by the events giving rise to the new unity, we must acknowledge and nurture whatever good those events can be turned to. We now have the ability to see the clear advantages of close cooperation on matters which affect us all. Let us use the knowledge, that wisdom gained from pain, and forge even stronger, institutional reliance on cooperation, consensus and coalition-building across the widest possible constituency as we go forward in this new global system.

The President: On behalf of the General Assembly, I wish to thank the President of the Republic of Palau for the statement he has just made.

Mr. Tommy Remengesau, Jr., President of the Republic of Palau, was escorted from the General Assembly Hall.

Agenda item 9 (*continued*)

General debate

The President: I now give the floor to Her Excellency Mrs. María Eugenia Brizuela de Ávila, Minister for Foreign Affairs of El Salvador.

Mrs. Brizuela de Ávila (El Salvador) (*spoke in Spanish*): We congratulate you, Sir, on your election to preside over the General Assembly at this session and wish you every success in fulfilling your mandate. Our appreciation also goes to Mr. Harri Holkeri for his work at the last session.

We wish to convey to our Secretary-General, Mr. Kofi Annan, our sincerest congratulations on his unanimous re-election for a second term as leader of this Organization in a broad acknowledgement of his abilities, leadership and firm resolve to promote the purposes and principles of the Charter, which have been rightly recognized with the awarding to him and the United Nations of the Nobel Peace Prize.

The delegation of El Salvador believes that the deplorable and irrational terrorist attacks on the people and Government of the United States, which we repudiated and condemned at the time and do so again in this forum, have made it plain that terrorism in all its forms and manifestations is a grave threat to peace, freedom and democracy. Given the special nature of that scourge, it is essential that we unite our wills and pool our efforts to combat and eradicate it.

These acts of terrorism have affected us all directly, because they represent an assault on civilization, which is based on the values and principles embodied in the Charter of the Organization. Indeed, such acts affect not only international peace and security, but also the growth and development of our economies. In view of all this, the countries represented here should not allow minority groups to crush our peoples' democratic spirit or to sow permanent uncertainty and fear by means of violence and threats directed against the most fundamental principles of human coexistence.

It is precisely the norms of human coexistence that underpin and sustain peace, freedom and development for humanity, regardless of ideology, culture, race or religion. We concur with many delegations that the struggle against terrorism should

not be considered, much less interpreted, as a struggle among civilizations or nations.

Pursuant to the decisions taken by the international community, the Government of El Salvador is taking the proper steps to fulfil the provisions articulated in the pertinent resolutions of the Security Council and the General Assembly and other measures decided upon at the regional and continental level. It is appropriate to mention that at the Central American level, the Security Commission has adopted an ambitious programme of action so that we can work together to combat terrorism.

With respect to our national situation, on a number of occasions we have reiterated the commitment and political resolve of the Government of El Salvador to tackle effectively the challenges of building sustainable human development. We have made much progress in the last decade.

However, as everyone knows, this year began with serious natural disasters. The two earthquakes in January and February shook the very foundations of Salvadoran society, since 25 per cent of the population was affected, and losses amounted to 13 per cent of the gross domestic product. The devastating effects of the earthquakes extended into the economic and social spheres, obliging us to implement an emergency programme, which meant changing and adapting the Government's plan to match the new priorities, redirecting the State's limited financial resources to reconstruction. This was compounded by an unprecedented drop in international coffee prices, our major export commodity. We also suffered a widespread drought, affecting agricultural production, which is the unpinning of our economy.

Thus we believe that it is essential to reiterate our special recognition of and gratitude to all the countries and international organizations that provided us with valuable assistance during these natural disasters. I wish to thank in particular the World Food Programme for its effective work in relieving the food-supply problems of large sectors of the population affected by the drought.

It is of the utmost importance to the Government of El Salvador to refer on this occasion to something that has marked a turning point in the history of our nation and which, at the same time, represents a success for United Nations peacekeeping operations: the first multidisciplinary mission to resolve an internal conflict, as was the case in El Salvador.

I wish to highlight, with great satisfaction, that 16 January 2002 will mark 10 years since the historic signing of the El Salvador Peace Agreements, which formally ended the armed conflict that had wreaked havoc in our society for 12 years. The Secretary-General participated actively and played an important role as intermediary in the process of negotiation and in the verification of the parties' compliance with all the commitments they had undertaken.

Since that date, we have engaged in a process that we can divide into two phases — first, the transition from war to peace, and second, the transition from peace to democracy. During the process we have made great efforts to fulfil the commitments of the Agreements in order to achieve peace, democracy, respect for and protection of human rights, national reconciliation and reunification of Salvadoran society, and we have achieved qualitative changes in these areas.

The Government of El Salvador, as a signatory party deeply interested in faithful observance of the Agreements, has been gratified to see the success achieved in executing these undertakings, putting into practice a constructive policy that has enabled us to deal with sensitive and complex issues. The members of the international community, especially the donor countries and the United Nations, can attest to this.

In fulfilling the Peace Agreements, all Salvadorans shouldered the obligations with the seriousness and responsibility that were required, mindful of the solemn significance and the implications of such fulfilment for the aspirations and expectations that the Agreement outlined, both domestic and vis-à-vis the international community. This is why we are very pleased that in fulfilling our obligations we have not betrayed the trust of those that showed us solidarity and supported us throughout the process.

Now more than ever, new possibilities are opening up for all sectors of the country — with a vision of being a nation — to face the future with a sense of shared responsibility, and for us to undertake the new challenges involved in continuing to bolster democracy and promoting economic and social development. Consequently, we are committed to the process of modernizing and strengthening democratic institutions in conformity with the strategy of

sustainable development, whose focus and destiny are to improve the quality of life of each and every Salvadoran.

In a globalized and interdependent world, any situation that affects the economy of the industrialized countries and those with emerging economies has a significant impact on the conditions in the remainder of the countries of the international community. The trend towards a slowdown in these economies becomes disquieting for our countries because of its adverse effects on fostering economic progress and maintaining social stability.

In this regard, it is essential to pay attention to the problems besetting the international economic order and prevent them from spreading and becoming causes that generate fresh conflict, especially in the developing countries. For this reason, we hope that the outcome of the meeting of the World Trade Organization in Doha will be beneficial for the developing countries.

It is appropriate to note that during the participation of the President of El Salvador, Francisco Flores, in the Group of Eight Summit in Genoa, Italy, on 10 June, he voiced the anxiety and concerns that we feel about the serious problems that exist and stated our aspirations as developing countries to promote the progress of our peoples. On that occasion, President Flores noted that we do not want handouts or concessions based on paternalistic approaches. We want to become partners in development and achieve mutual benefits so that we have the opportunity to gradually improve our conditions and have better access to and derive greater benefit from international markets.

In El Salvador, we have put into practice a number of measures concerning the free market and promotion of foreign investment. They have led to internationally recognized economic openness, which in practice has included a process of privatization, especially in the communications, energy and finance sectors and in the area of social security, enhancing our potential for growth and development.

At the beginning of this year, as part of a gradual process that will lead finally to the elimination of the national currency, the Government of El Salvador enacted the Monetary Integration Act, establishing the dollar as the unit of account in the financial system. This will facilitate our trading and financial integration and further improve conditions for national and foreign investment and access to international financial sources.

In the area of trade, in addition to having a free-trade relationship with our fraternal Central American countries, we have extended our ties with Mexico, the Dominican Republic and Chile, establishing free-trade treaties with them, while others are in the process of being negotiated with Panama and Canada.

At the same time, we are making an effort to strengthen the process of the Central American Integration System (SICA), where we have taken significant steps, including customs activities and a regional proposal to modernize and transform Central America. The proposal's strategic projects for development were presented this year to the Consultative Group in Madrid. The implementation of the Puebla-Panama Plan, in which Central America is partnered with Mexico for its development, is part of these efforts.

In general, we can say that, given the trend towards globalization, which marks modern international relations, and despite the difficulties and complexities involved, our country is doing its utmost to take advantage of the phenomenon. In this regard, the least that we can hope is that there will be good will and political resolve on the part of the developed countries to grant us solidarity and support to enable us to become effectively incorporated in the process.

In view of the importance of the commitment assumed by the heads of State and Government in the Millennium Declaration of the United Nations, we note that the International Conference on Financing for Development, to be held in Mexico, and the World Summit on Sustainable Development will provide opportunities to demonstrate the solidarity and cooperation of the international community, particularly on the part of the developed countries, by the adoption of appropriate measures conducive to achieving fair and equitable development, especially in the developing countries.

With respect to other sensitive issues for the international community, the Government of El Salvador views with concern the continuation or worsening of certain problems that, if not resolved, will be a threat to international peace and security. These include the ongoing conflict in the Middle East, which is a source of great concern, especially because

during the past year we have seen unremitting violence, leading to the irreparable loss of human life and material and economic damage in the region, and to a constant increase in the suffering of the Israeli and Palestinian peoples.

In that context, the Government of El Salvador reiterates its support for all efforts and measures aimed at achieving a negotiated political solution that takes into account the interests of the parties directly involved, in order to achieve a firm and lasting peace. The State of Israel's right to exist and to live within secure borders, as well as the inalienable right of the Palestinian people to self-determination and to establish its own State, are basic preconditions for achieving peace, which will enable the leaders of the region to devote themselves to promoting the progress and well-being of their peoples.

The extraordinary situation of the Republic of China in Taiwan is a case that the international community should examine, particularly in the light of the most recent changes in the international system.

Regarding the strengthening of the world Organization, it is important that this opportunity not be lost to address an item of priority interest for all Member States: Security Council reform. In this regard, we must emphasize the commitments contained in the Millennium Declaration so that this reform can be carried out. In that regard, we urge the Open-ended Working Group established for this purpose to redouble its efforts so that those commitments will be fulfilled and so that we can achieve, on the basis of flexible positions, a general agreement on the issue.

Finally, given the complex and uncertain international situation, we urge all Governments, groups and sectors of civil society to reflect on the imperative importance of working together in a spirit of human solidarity that will enable us to overcome all differences that separate us in order to achieve great global objectives that could not be achieved on an individual basis, with a view to attaining the spiritual and physical peace to which all nations aspire.

The President: I now give the floor to His Excellency The Honourable Mr. Ram Sharan Mahat, Minister for Finance of Nepal.

Mr. Mahat (Nepal): At the outset, I wish to express, on behalf of His Majesty's Government and the people of Nepal, and on my own behalf, our profound condolences to the Government and the people of the United States, as well as to the families who lost their loved ones in the unfortunate crash of American Airlines flight 587 on 12 November.

Let me congratulate you, Mr. President, on your well-deserved election to steer the fifty-sixth session of the General Assembly. My felicitations also go to the other members of the Bureau.

I also congratulate the Secretary-General on his election to a second term and on being awarded this year's Nobel Peace Prize, together with the United Nations.

We are meeting against the backdrop of the 11 September terrorist attacks that took innumerable lives and caused colossal damage in our host country and host city. The Nepalese people express their full solidarity with the American people in this hour of grief and support the American-led war on terror.

The horror's powerful ripples have been felt beyond the borders of the United States, around the world. They have pushed the already slumping global economy into a recession that is sure to unleash misery and starvation on millions of people and kill thousands of children in the developing world.

In the wake of the terrorist onslaught, the United Nations was quick to act. It approved fresh measures, including Security Council resolution 1373 (2001), calling on Member States to stem the terrorists' channels of communication, freeze their finances, deny them refuge and support, strengthen domestic and international law against them and collectively take all necessary measures to prevent and defeat them.

A broad coalition of States united around a common goal has launched a global campaign against terrorism. Itself being a victim of terrorist activities, which have taken nearly 1,800 lives over the past five years and have grossly undermined development efforts, Nepal fully understands the challenges and cost of defeating this elusive enemy that has no borders, no territory and no standing army. Yet with collective resolve and determination and with preventive and curative actions we can sniff out the forces of terrorism, if we only refrain from political expediency and moral relativism.

Enforcing all the existing relevant conventions and resolutions is as crucial as the early conclusion of a

comprehensive convention on terrorism in order to achieve the objective.

The twenty-first century begins with a new and uncertain security environment. No sooner had we put the wars, and the cold war, of the last century behind us and had begun to grapple with internal conflicts than terrorism emerged as a grave threat to international peace and security. It should be tackled decisively and without delay.

As we engage in the war on terrorism, we must not forget that the edifice of durable peace can be erected only on the fundamental pillars of the prevention of conflicts, the peaceful resolution of disputes, persistent efforts for disarmament, poverty reduction and development, and respect for diversity, fairness and justice. The culture of peace and dialogue should advance the process.

We now live in a global village where all are interdependent. A fire in one house may consume the entire village if left unchecked. That is why concerted efforts to secure peace and stability are critical in the troubled nations of Africa, Asia, Europe and elsewhere that have suffered wanton instability and violence that are pernicious for their national integrity, social harmony and economic progress.

In particular, we will have to end the cycle of violence and death in the Middle East by finding a durable solution to its festering problem. The war on terror and the restoration of stability will succeed in Afghanistan if its people are saved from starvation and unwarranted hardship now and assured of their country's reconstruction when the struggle is over.

Criminal acts such as those involving the present anthrax scare in the United States and the use of sarin gas in the Tokyo subway a few years back are strong testimony to the necessity of abolishing biological and chemical weapons before an appalling catastrophe befalls us. More importantly, the proliferation of nuclear weapons and the increasing likelihood of their use by terrorists, viewed in the context of the successful 2000 Review Conference of the Parties to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons, constitute compelling reasons to follow the path of complete and general nuclear disarmament.

The inability of the Conference on Disarmament to agree on its programme of work for the past several years raises serious doubts about our commitment to disarmament. That forum should be activated without delay and should be tasked with negotiating new disarmament treaties, including one on nuclear disarmament, and to strengthen the existing ones.

In order for United Nations peace efforts to become instrumental in promoting global peace, Nepal has lent them moral backing, has contributed nearly 40,000 troops and has sustained 42 casualties in the line of duty. Nepal is willing to work for the improvement of peacekeeping operations, taking into account both the Brahimi Panel report and our collective experience.

While we are preoccupied with the immediate steps against terrorists, we must not overlook or abandon other equally pressing issues central to durable peace, such as the need to remove poverty, create jobs and provide education, drinking water, health and other basic services in poor countries. The reason is simple: terrorists and anarchists often exploit the vulnerabilities of the impoverished, the unemployed, the excluded and the disaffected to carry out their sinister designs.

Of course, poor countries have no choice but to undertake painful reforms to improve their governance and performance. Decreasing assistance to the poor in the face of increasing prosperity in the rich countries defies our understanding. Therefore, it is equally urgent and essential that they receive increased support from their development partners.

For example, rich countries need to reverse the decline in development assistance and meet the aid targets, fully fund and expand the Heavily Indebted Poor Countries (HIPC) Initiative to cover all least developed and worst affected countries and facilitate investment in the South. Their trade barriers ought to be dismantled and markets opened to spur exports and help to broaden the production capacities of developing countries.

As the advanced nations seek to hammer out a stimulus package to extricate their economies from the dark shadow of the present economic downturn, they must also be mindful of the much greater needs of poorer nations at this time of economic hardship.

Undoubtedly, all developing countries face serious obstacles to their development journey. But landlocked developing countries suffer from the

additional impediments of remoteness, transit-transport difficulties and lack of access to sea-based resources.

However, nowhere are the trauma of deprivation and dispossession and problems of development more staggering than in the least developed countries, virtually all of which are in Africa and Asia. Globalization has further marginalized them, and the information revolution has hardly touched them. The United Nations special programmes of the past two decades have apparently been inadequate and unable to make a difference, as many of these countries have become increasingly worse off over the last decade.

Nepal is committed to vigorously implementing the outcome of the Third United Nations Conference on the Least Developed Countries. We sincerely hope that our development partners will leave no stone unturned in carrying out their commitments, including the European Union's "everything but arms" scheme.

Conflicts and chaos, and deprivation and disasters continue to spawn humanitarian problems and to create situations in which human rights are compromised. Today there are 22 million refugees, including 100,000 in Nepal, and many more internally displaced persons around the globe. Responding to such exigencies is naturally a priority, as is the war on terror, but we must bear in mind that humanitarian assistance cannot prevent the recurrence of crises until people are empowered and their vulnerabilities addressed.

I should like to take this occasion to thank the international community for its support in the maintenance of refugees in Nepal. We urge it to continue its assistance until the problem is resolved, leading to their repatriation. To this end, we are engaged in dialogue with the Government of the Kingdom of Bhutan.

The need has never been so urgent to protect refugees, maintain ecological balance, preserve the environment, promote sustainable development and ensure that this planet remains at least as liveable for our children as it has been for us. The strengthening of existing global treaties on the environment, and particularly the adoption of the Kyoto Protocol, is urgently required.

Nepal, a least developed and landlocked nation, has accorded its topmost priority to poverty reduction, spending more than 70 per cent of its budget in rural areas where the poorest people live, and has adopted a market-led development policy with a two-pronged strategy.

Policies and measures have been instituted to attract foreign investment and to harness people's creative potential by means of economic liberalization, investment incentives, decentralization and the rationalization of public spending priorities. Of late, we have taken steps towards land reform, the empowerment of women through education, inheritance rights and political participation, together with special developmental programmes to assist weak and vulnerable people and regions.

Yet progress has been slow in coming, with the attendant serious consequences. Nepal's per capita gross national product of $220 is one of the lowest in the world; 38 per cent of the population lives below the poverty line; and the ratio of the Government's foreign debt stock to government revenue is 410 per cent, and to annual exports, 350 per cent. These statistics are incredibly disheartening, even among the least developed countries.

Despite this, Nepal is left out of the Heavily Indebted Poor Countries (HIPC) Initiative. I therefore urge the donor community to include Nepal in the Initiative to help release our resources from debt-servicing obligations, which will enable us to implement poverty-reduction programmes more effectively. But this will in no way substitute for the need for increased development assistance.

The United Nations has an elemental role to play in meeting all these challenges. To prepare it to address them, Nepal believes that we should revitalize the General Assembly and the Economic and Social Council and augment cooperation and coordination among the various United Nations organs. Likewise, we deem it imperative to enlarge the Security Council and to improve its methods of work, including through the deepening of its cooperation with troop-contributing countries.

Veto power militates against the basic tenets of equality and democracy, it reflects the realities of a bygone era. Nepal is convinced of the necessity to do away with the veto and understands the profound difficulty of achieving this goal. Until it has been eliminated, this power ought to be rationalized by defining the parameters for its application.

The Millennium Declaration has given us a vision of and benchmarks for a peaceful, decent, just and viable global society, and it has indicated how the United Nations could be instrumental in achieving them. It is our collective obligation to implement them, sharing the burdens and benefits equally. Nepal welcomes the road map for the implementation of the Declaration.

The implementation review of various global compacts has unmistakably established a shortage of financial resources as the principal reason for lack of progress. Nepal hopes that the World Summit on Sustainable Development and the International Conference on Financing for Development, to be held next year, will do their best to chalk out a blueprint for financing developmental activities, which is the foremost concern of the developing world.

As regional cooperation is an effective vehicle for broadening markets and production as well as for building collective competitiveness, Nepal and other South Asian countries have been working together under the umbrella of the South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation (SAARC). I am happy to inform the Assembly that Nepal will have the privilege of hosting its next summit in January 2002, following its postponement two years ago.

Again, in the spirit of regional solidarity and of its abiding commitment to peace and disarmament, Nepal looks forward to the early relocation of the Regional Centre for Peace and Disarmament in Asia and the Pacific to Kathmandu, where it belongs. We have, on our part, completed all necessary preparations for the effective functioning of the Centre from Nepal.

Democracy, development and human rights are integral to society's advancement. Therefore, Nepal is engaged in promoting democracy and freedom, and human rights and justice for all, particularly women, children and vulnerable groups. We cherish these values, which are crucial to preserving human dignity and to bestowing on human beings the opportunity to reach their full potential.

In the aftermath of the agonizing royal massacre in Nepal early this year, our people's faith in democracy has been further reinforced, as it ensured a smooth succession and stability in the face of a terrible crisis. I thank all our friends for their solidarity and support at a time of national tragedy in Nepal.

We have witnessed unprecedented unity among nations in fighting major wars in the past, and terrorism at present. If we show the same kind of resolve and dedication, we can successfully fight poverty, deprivation and discrimination. The United Nations should brace itself to face them effectively, and Member States should assume a greater sense of responsibility. Nepal, committed as it is to the principles and purposes of the United Nations, will continue to do its best to help it achieve its goals and to make a difference in our people's lives.

The President: I give the floor to His Excellency Mr. Somsavat Lengsavad, Deputy Prime Minister and Minister for Foreign Affairs of the Lao People's Democratic Republic.

Mr. Lengsavad (Lao People's Democratic Republic) (*spoke in Lao; English text provided by the delegation*): On behalf of the delegation of the Lao People's Democratic Republic, allow me to join previous speakers in congratulating you, Sir, on your well-deserved election to preside over the fifty-sixth session of the General Assembly. It is a tribute to the important contributions your country, the Republic of Korea, has made throughout the past years to the work of our Organization.

I should also like to take this opportunity to pay tribute to our Secretary-General, Mr. Kofi Annan, for his outstanding and effective leadership of our Organization. The prestigious Nobel Peace Prize conferred on him is both a recognition of his personal achievements and an affirmation of the great and legitimate mission undertaken by the United Nations. We wish him well and much success in his second term as head of the United Nations during the next five years.

The general debate of the fifty-sixth session of the General Assembly was not able to proceed as planned, as a result of the terrorist attacks of 11 September, which caused thousands of deaths. In the wake of this tragic event, the Government of the Lao People's Democratic Republic condemned the terrorist acts while reaffirming its consistent policy of cooperating with the international community in the fight against terrorism in all its forms. In this respect, in late October, the Lao People's Democratic Republic decided to become party to five international conventions on the fight against terrorism.

This tragedy has generated a set of ensuing events. The Government of the Lao People's Democratic Republic views the current situation with great concern and considers that it is high time that our Organization played a growing role, in conformity with the United Nations Charter, in the combat against terrorism and for the peace and security of the peoples of the world.

Since its inception, the United Nations has made an important contribution to the maintenance of world peace and international security, as well as to cooperation and development in all areas of human endeavour. Last year, at the historic Summit, the world leaders reaffirmed the relevance and importance of our Organization in the new, globalized world. At that same Summit, we also pledged our commitment to ensuring that the United Nations adapts to new areas and strengthens its capacity to deal with the challenges of maintaining world peace and promoting the development of all countries.

Several issues inherited from the last century failed to be addressed. Although the Open-ended Working Group on Security Council reform has spared no effort to fully carry out its mandate, the key issues of the reform of the Council remain unsettled. Therefore, we reaffirm our position in favour of the expansion of both the permanent and non-permanent membership of the Security Council. Equally, we support the efforts to address the issue of the right of veto and to find a solution acceptable to all Member States.

The situation in the Middle East has recently reached levels of increased violence, causing loss of life, destruction, damage to property and deep sorrow and a desire for revenge among both the Palestinian and Israeli peoples. The Lao People's Democratic Republic reaffirms its support for the establishment of an independent Palestinian State and for respect for Israel's right to existence. That would contribute to guaranteeing long-lasting peace and security in the Middle East.

Almost every year, the General Assembly has overwhelmingly adopted a resolution on lifting the commercial and economic embargo against the Republic of Cuba. However, those resolutions have not been effectively implemented. The Government of the Lao People's Democratic Republic appeals to the United States and Cuba to jointly reach a rapid solution in the interest of the peoples of the two countries, which would contribute to promoting peace and developmental cooperation in the region and the world.

On the Korean peninsula, several events have marked the progress made towards the unification of Korea, such as meetings and exchanges of visits of leaders at all levels, reunions of families long kept apart and humanitarian assistance. The Lao Government has followed these developments closely and commends the positive results. Nevertheless, we are deeply concerned about the situation prevailing in the region and hope that under the wise-guidance of the leaders of the two countries, the peaceful unification of an independent Korea will be achieved so as to meet the fervent aspirations of the Korean people and to contribute to peace, stability and cooperation in East Asia and throughout the world.

In South-East Asia and the Asia-Pacific region, several outstanding activities to promote peace and cooperation have gained prominence in the region and throughout the world. In Hanoi, the Association of South-East Asian Nations (ASEAN) Regional Forum reaffirmed the importance of preventive diplomacy, confidence-building measures and avoiding military confrontation. The Asia Pacific Economic Cooperation (APEC) meeting in China was a historic rally of unity in the fight against terrorism and in setting goals for economic recovery. The Summit of ASEAN members plus China, Japan and the Republic of Korea, held in Brunei early this month, stressed the need to combat terrorism in all its forms, overcome economic recession and promote development cooperation.

The Lao People's Democratic Republic notes with satisfaction that the Third United Nations Conference on the Least Developed Countries, held in May this year, adopted a more realistic plan of action to enable the least developed countries to emerge decisively from abject poverty and be integrated into the global economic system. We very much hope that the international community will make joint efforts to achieve the development objectives enunciated in that plan of action.

For many years now, the international community has recognized that the landlocked developing countries are one of the three vulnerable and disadvantaged groups of developing countries. Their vulnerable and disadvantaged condition is attributed to lack of access to the sea, remoteness from world

markets and prohibitive transport costs, averaging 14 per cent of export earnings, compared to only 8.8 per cent for other developing countries.

The Lao People's Democratic Republic, in its capacity as Chairman of the Group of Landlocked Developing Countries, would like to appeal the General Assembly to endorse the recommendation made by the fifth Meeting of Governmental Experts from Landlocked and Transit Developing Countries and the donor community to convene in 2003 an international ministerial meeting of landlocked and transit developing countries and the donor community on transport cooperation, with the objective of addressing the special problems and needs of the landlocked developing countries. In this connection, we wish to welcome the Government of Kazakhstan's offer to host the meeting.

By the end of 2000, there were 36.1 million people worldwide who had tested HIV-positive, of whom 90 per cent live in developing countries. It is our hope that the international community will take necessary drastic measures, including through the provision of additional and sustained resources, to implement the Declaration of Commitment on HIV/AIDS, adopted during the last special session of the General Assembly.

Another issue of global concern is narcotic drugs. The production and abuse of drugs have increased and have become a cause of crime affecting many social dimensions. Realizing their own responsibilities, ASEAN Governments and China convened an international conference in October 2000 in Thailand, where a plan of action to make ASEAN a drug-free zone by 2015 was adopted. Also, a ministerial meeting between four countries — China, Laos, Myanmar and Thailand — was held in August this year with the objective of curbing drug production and trade and the importing of chemical precursors in the subregion.

In an effort to achieve the goals established by the Political Declaration of the General Assembly special session held in 1998 and to fully eradicate opium production, the Government of the Lao People's Democratic Republic has mobilized the people and, together with donors and international organizations, has taken various measures through tailoring projects involving crop substitution, preventive education, drug-addiction rehabilitation and law enforcement. As a result, in the course of just three years, between 1998 and 2000, opium-cultivated areas have been reduced from 26,000 hectares in 1998 to 17,000 hectares in 2000. The aggregate opium production has also declined from 140 tons to 117 tons for the same period. Moreover, on 12 October 2001, the Lao Government launched a National Anti-Narcotic Campaign, chaired by the Prime Minister, with a view to ensuring that Laos is a drug-free country with a social order and a bright future for the next generation.

In general, over the last year, the Lao People's Democratic Republic has enjoyed firm political stability and progressive development in all sectors, especially in food security. All this was reflected in the solemn celebration of the twenty-fifth founding anniversary of the Lao People's Democratic Republic and the successful conclusion of the Seventh Congress of the Lao People's Revolutionary Party. These historic events have profoundly enhanced national patriotism, a sense of self-reliance, self-resilience and ownership for the Lao people. In carrying out our mandated task, we have concentrated all our efforts and untapped strength to achieve the goals of poverty reduction by halving the number of families currently living under the poverty line, stopping slash-and-burn practices, fully eradicating opium production by the year 2005, and creating an environment that will enable the country to quit once and for all the status of least developed country by the year 2020.

The first year of the twenty-first century has witnessed new challenges that pose anxiety and concern for all people worldwide. However, the twentieth century has created institutional foundations for strengthening the legal and cooperative framework, modern technology and partial reform of our Organization. In addition, dialogue and cooperation between countries in the economic, social and cultural fields and in other areas as well continue to be a general trend in the world. In this spirit, I believe that the United Nations, a unique and truly universal Organization, reaffirmed by world leaders at the Millennium Summit last year, should play a significant role in addressing these new challenges so that we can turn our world into a peaceful, happy and prosperous one.

The President: I now call on His Excellency The Honourable Louis Straker, Deputy Prime Minister and Minister for Foreign Affairs of Saint Vincent and the Grenadines.

Mr. Straker (Saint Vincent and the Grenadines): Mr. President, I bring you greetings from the small and beautiful country of Saint Vincent and the Grenadines. Please accept our congratulations on your election as President of the fifty-sixth session of the General Assembly. You are assured of my country's full support for a successful session. We would also like to offer our heartfelt congratulations to Secretary-General Kofi Annan on his election to a second term, and to the United Nations Organization and the Secretary-General for the prestigious Nobel Peace Prize received in honour of their efforts to ensure a better and more peaceful world. It is impossible to think of more deserving recipients of this award as this coalition of nations and our beloved Secretary-General strive to ensure that the Organization fulfils its mandate according to the Charter.

I commend the President of the United States of America for the statesmanship and resolve with which he continues to deal with the difficulties at hand. I also salute the civic leaders of this great city of New York for the institutional leadership during this problematic time. The city has been visited by tragedy once again this week. On behalf of the Government and people of Saint Vincent and the Grenadines, I offer sincere condolences to all those touched by this latest disaster, not least our neighbours and friends in the Dominican Republic.

Our Government stands firm with the international community on Security Council resolution 1373 (2001) against terrorism. We are working closely with the Governments of the region, the Caribbean Community (CARICOM), Latin America and the United States in an effort to fight the scourge of terrorism. Our Government has tightened security and implemented measures intended to close any possible avenue that criminals and terrorists may exploit. We will do whatever is necessary to ensure that barbarism is defeated. Compliance with resolution 1373 (2001) is difficult and expensive for small States with limited means and technical expertise. But we will comply.

The international community has mustered an impressive effort to fight the plague of terrorism. In this midst of this, however, we must not lose sight of the fact that terrorism will not be eradicated by one victory in one war. It behooves us as world leaders to look deeper into the causes of violence and terror. It is the firm belief of my Government that marginalization of the poor and underprivileged creates a hotbed for extremism and lawlessness.

We in Saint Vincent and the Grenadines and the wider Caribbean have triumphed over the evils of slavery and colonialism to emerge with a truly noble civilization. We are a people made up of races from the four corners of the earth who have melded into one beautiful whole. We are democratic in our governance and tolerant in our attitudes. We are a hard-working, industrious people. We are proud. It is not in our nature to seek alms from the rich. But, Mr. President, it is self-evident that an economy such as ours, which is almost totally dependent on agriculture and tourism, needs help if we are to survive and prosper.

The influence of the multinational Chiquita and Dole banana companies has been working for years to destroy the industry of our banana farmers. The World Trade Organization (WTO), of which we are a member, seems bent on widening the gulf between rich and poor. We are not optimistic about the outcome of this week's economic Ministerial Meeting in Doha. A farmer working one or two acres of mountain land and eking out a living cannot compete with the giants who control thousands of acres in the Central American countries.

Mr. President, if you take away that which feeds us, you must offer something in return. That is why the upcoming conference in Mexico on financing for development is of seminal importance to the small and developing countries of this world. It is time for the economic giants of the world to stop paying lip service to the idea of financing for development and to put into practice real and workable means for the poor, underprivileged and vulnerable nations to join the mainstream. We need the commercial barriers erected by those intent on maintaining their hegemony to be removed. We adhere to the adage "Trade, not Aid". But this is not yet a realistic option and, in the present climate, will not be for the foreseeable future. We hate asking for charity. We merely ask that promises be kept and commitments adhered to. As a small island developing State, we need relief from the burden of our foreign debts, high interest rates and other unfair international trade constraints. We need the Bretton Woods institutions to perform their function in a democratic and just manner.

HIV/AIDS remains rampant worldwide. The recent grave disaster in the United States of America has pushed other burning issues of the day off the

world agenda, but people have not stopped dying of AIDS. The 26 million who have been forecast to succumb to the scourge in the next 10 years will still succumb. In the same way that the United States and the European Union were able to persuade drug companies to produce drugs to combat anthrax at a fraction of their normal cost, the same drug companies should be persuaded to produce affordable treatment for this plague, which is causing a national security threat to many poor countries.

The state of affairs of HIV/AIDS has reached circumstances of extreme urgency in our country. The Caribbean is now only second to sub-Saharan Africa in having the fastest rise in the incidents of HIV/AIDS. We are not equipped to handle this crisis. We are not able to afford the drugs to treat our people. Therefore, our people are dying — dying in their hundreds and thousands. This world crisis, unlike terrorism, is one of which we know exactly what is required. Do we have the will to provide the necessary means in order to resolve this problem? The special session of the General Assembly last June on HIV/AIDS ended with a global commitment to combat this disease. Are we living up to our commitment?

Prior to 11 September, our Government implemented sound fiscal policies that resulted in positive economic growth for our country. However, after that infamous day, the economic outlook turned extremely bleak. Our burgeoning tourist industry has suffered tremendously, with employment taking an especially heavy blow. Hotel occupancy dropped to a 15-year low. There seems to be no end to the ripple effects on the industry. Just as people were beginning to fly again, we had the tragedy in Queens on Monday. This plunges us deeper into economic gloom and the real and frightening possibility of recession looms ever closer.

Following the admission of Tuvalu to the United Nations last year, we were very close to realizing the principle of universality set forth in the Charter of the United Nations. Now, only one remaining country awaits admission to the United Nations. That country, as we all know, is the Republic of China on Taiwan. The Republic of China's impressive record of economic and political development is one of the most persuasive reasons to eliminate the United Nations sole exception to universality. Fifty years ago, Taiwan was a poor and underdeveloped society. Fifty years later, the Republic of China on Taiwan has become an affluent and prosperous country, with a per capita gross national product of around $14,000, annual trade of over $300 billion and a gross national product of $320 billion.

Although the Republic of China is only the one hundred thirty-eighth largest country in the world in terms of lands and the forty-sixth largest in terms of population, it is today the world's seventeenth largest economy, the fifteenth largest trading nation, the eighth largest investor, the fourth largest holder of foreign exchange and the third largest exporter of information technology products.

Under our principle of universality, we cannot continue to exclude a country with such an impressive record of achievements. The time has come to open our doors to the Republic of China on Taiwan.

The situation in Afghanistan calls for immediate action on the part of the United Nations to fill the power vacuum left by the departure of the ruling Taliban from the capital, Kabul. We must make sure that the new administration is representative of all factions and we must further ensure that the suffering and starving people receive immediate humanitarian aid to ensure their survival through the coming winter months.

Finally, I must reiterate that we are encouraged by the efforts undertaken by the United Nations to work towards a society that ensures security and human dignity for all in the future. The future looks good if we all work together for the betterment of mankind. I assure the Assembly that my Prime Minister, Mr. Ralph Gonsalves, and the Government and people of Saint Vincent and the Grenadines are fully committed to supporting the United Nations in these endeavours, and may God direct all of us on this path.

The President: I now give the floor to His Excellency Mr. Rodolphe Adada, Minister for Foreign Affairs, Cooperation and Francophonie of the Congo.

Mr. Adada (Congo) (*spoke in French*): The crash of American Airlines flight 587 two days ago has once again cast into mourning the city of New York, which has already suffered so much. On behalf of the delegation of the Congo, I offer my most sincere condolences to the bereaved families.

I wish at the outset to congratulate you sincerely, Sir, on your outstanding election to the presidency of the General Assembly at its fifty-sixth session. The trust that has been placed in you reflects the

international community's recognition of your qualities as an experienced diplomat and is a tribute to your country, the Republic of Korea, for the decisive role it plays in maintaining peace and security throughout the world. You may rest assured of the full cooperation of the delegation of the Congo.

I express our gratitude to your predecessor, Mr. Harri Holkeri, for the competence and deftness with which he carried out his task.

I also take this opportunity once again to offer our sincere congratulations to Secretary-General Kofi Annan on his brilliant re-election and on his reception of the Nobel Peace Prize, which is a crown on his personal contribution and on that of our Organization.

We still have in our mind's eye the terrifying and unbearable images of the attacks perpetrated against the United States on 11 September —acts of pure barbarity, blind terrorism that we condemn absolutely, as we do all other forms of violence, which must be curbed and eradicated. In keeping with the commitment undertaken at the Millennium Summit, we must be especially vigilant and determined in the fight against that evil, which has no place in the world today. The Congo fully endorses all the relevant United Nations resolutions aimed at strengthening the effectiveness of the response of the international community to terrorism, in particular Security Council resolutions 1368 (2001) and 1373 (2001).

The African continent, which has suffered for many years from violence that has hampered its development and integration into the world of today, has clearly condemned such acts, which can lead only to further destitution and poverty. That is why, at a time when it is launching new initiatives to help it to emerge from crisis and promote development, Africa is dressing its wounds and appealing for various forms of local, regional and international mediation. These initiatives have already borne fruit.

With regard to the conflict in the Democratic Republic of the Congo, which is of particular concern to my country, we welcome the progress that has been accomplished in implementing the Lusaka Agreement, which is enabling the United Nations Organization Mission in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (MONUC) to move on to phase III of its deployment. In this context, we welcome the Security Council meeting with the Political Committee of the Lusaka Agreement. We invite all the parties to continue to demonstrate their goodwill in carrying out the commitments they have undertaken. We have great hopes for the inter-Congolese dialogue, which is scheduled to take place in South Africa.

After years of war and illegal exploitation of its wealth, that brotherly country needs to return to peace, national unity and political stability and to fully recover its sovereignty so that it can achieve the progress promised by its enormous potential. My country, for its part, has always maintained good-neighbourly relations with the other side of the Congo River, and we will continue to contribute in every way we can to ensure the peace and normalization that are so greatly desired.

We would like to take this opportunity to thank Mr. Kofi Annan and, through him, his Special Representative, Mr. Namanga Ngongi, for the action that has been carried out within the framework of MONUC.

As for Burundi, we would like to pay tribute to President Nelson Mandela for his mediation, which has led to the formation of a government of national unity, to which we wish every success. This process, which should contribute to a return to lasting peace and stability for that country, deserves the full support of the international community.

In Angola, the consistent resort to terrorism and other acts of sabotage by UNITA, in disregard of the relevant Security Council resolutions, should lead us to strengthen the sanctions against that organization, which is responsible for the continuation of war in the country. The Congo reaffirms its solidarity with the people and the Government of Angola, who are sparing no effort to restore peace and rebuild their country. The international community must provide all necessary assistance to Angola.

Given the continuing violence in the Middle East, a return to the Oslo accords is urgently required if the current deadlock is to be broken. We appeal to the parties in conflict to show a willingness to move forward so as to re-establish a dialogue, which remains the only way to restore lasting peace in an area of the world that has been troubled for far too long. We therefore welcome the constructive proposals made by the President of the United States of America, His Excellency George W. Bush, on the coexistence of two States, Israel and Palestine, within secure and

recognized borders, as required by Security Council resolutions.

Situations such as these are often and almost systematically accompanied by the massive displacement of populations, which causes destabilization in neighbouring countries and worsens domestic problems. Such is the case in my country, which is currently hosting more than 200,000 refugees mainly from the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Angola, Rwanda and, more recently, the Central African Republic. The situation is a great cause for concern in a country that is only just emerging from war itself and is thus confronted by many other challenges. Given the seriousness of this situation, I would like once again to repeat the appeal of my Government for adequate assistance.

After the signing, at the end of 1999, of agreements on the cessation of hostilities, the priority tasks set out by President Denis Sassou Nguesso were national reconciliation and relaunching the democratic process, with a view to ensuring the reconstruction and development of the Congo. Today, almost all of these objectives are in the process of being achieved.

At the political level, we organized in Brazzaville, from 14 March to 17 April 2001, a national dialogue from which no one was barred, under the auspices of an international mediator, His Excellency El Hadj Omar Bongo, President of the Gabonese Republic, to whom we would like once again to express our deep gratitude. That dialogue has been sanctioned by the signing of the convention for peace and reconstruction in the Congo, as well as by the adoption of a preliminary draft of the constitution. This preliminary draft was approved by the National Transitional Council — our transitional parliament — on 2 September, and it will be submitted to a referendum before the end of this year. In preparation for the constitutional referendum and the general elections, an administrative census has just been carried out so as to draw up electoral lists.

I would also like to mention the efforts being made by the Government within the context of strengthening the consolidation of peace. These include, in particular, the demobilization of over 25,000 militia members; the collection of 10,817 weapons and rounds of ammunition, of which 6,484 have already been destroyed, with the technical support of the International Organization for Migration; assistance for the reintegration of 6,844 former militia members, with the United Nations helping with more than 2,190 small-scale projects; and the large-scale return of displaced persons and refugees to their normal domicile.

Furthermore, the establishment of a high commission responsible for reintegrating former combatants, a Committee for the follow-up of the convention on peace and reconstruction in the Congo, and a national committee to eradicate poverty all form part of this momentum for the consolidation of peace.

Our work will long continue to reflect the painful background against which it is taking place — the terrorist attacks. We have committed ourselves — rightly, unanimously and resolutely — to fighting this scourge. But this means that we must eradicate anything that might be used as a pretext for acts of blind destruction. To decrease tension throughout the world is to deal with situations that can foster terrorism. But we should remember that an apparently local crisis can have repercussions very far away — sometimes even at the global level. In this context, globalization must not be seen solely in economic and commercial terms. In reality, we are talking about the daily existence of individuals, peoples and nations, closely linked because of the rupture of borders.

The eleventh of September just gave us a painful reminder that the world is one in its suffering, meaning that we must also remain as one as we seek better times. That is why we must reduce, as quickly as possible, the gulf that separates the poorest among us from the wealthiest.

The socio-economic tensions we see throughout the world are also the result of extreme poverty in developing countries. Over 1 billion men and women are victims of malnutrition and do not even have access to drinking water or minimal health services. Unless we accelerate growth, poverty will continue to worsen. We must all therefore mobilize generally in order to urgently implement the strategies we ourselves have adopted here, especially those adopted during the Millennium Summit.

We should welcome the recent United Nations initiative to set up a Global Fund to Fight HIV/AIDS and to respond to the desire of developing countries to have access to new therapies at a lower cost.

With regard to the particular economic situation in Africa, Congo expects that during this session the international community will support the New Partnership for Africa's Development. As the Assembly is aware, the New Partnership — which harmonizes the concerns of the new African Union in the areas of development and economic integration — is the response that Africa unanimously intends to present to the challenges of globalization.

It is also appropriate now to again look at the essential instrument in that international struggle, namely, the United Nations. The conferences and special session organized by the United Nations this year — on the least developed countries, AIDS, human settlements, the illicit trade in light weapons in all its aspects, racism and many other issues — once again proves that our Organization remains a vital and irreplaceable instrument at the service of humankind. It is also in this framework that the fight against terrorism must take place.

As we stated during the Millennium Summit last year, we must, while relying on the United Nations, work more resolutely and methodically to find solutions to all those concerns. It is for this reason that I would like, in conclusion, to reaffirm my country's commitment to the United Nations, which must remain the preferred forum for international coordination and dialogue among civilizations, for the maintenance of international peace and security, for the peaceful settlement of conflict, and for international economic cooperation in the service of all.

The President: I now call on His Excellency Mr. Mahamat Saleh Annadif, Minister for Foreign Affairs of Chad.

Mr. Annadif (Chad) (*spoke in French*): The Government and the people of Chad were profoundly shocked and saddened by the horrendous attacks on the United States of America that took place on 11 September 2001 in New York and Washington. I would like to take this opportunity to convey once again the sincere condolences of the Government of Chad to the leaders of that friendly country and to the families of the innocent victims.

Those extremely barbaric attacks demonstrate how urgently necessary it is for the international community to move beyond the intentions expressed in the various agreements on terrorism and agree on the implementation of a genuine common plan of action to eradicate terrorism totally and to free our world from the suffering to which it is subjected as a result of extremism and fanaticism in all their forms. We must work together to preserve peace and understanding among peoples for the sake of mankind's future and all those who comprise it — Jews, Muslims, Christians and others.

While vigorously stressing that nothing can justify terrorism, the Republic of Chad would nonetheless like to share with the Assembly some thoughts prompted by the serious situation facing the world.

Terrorist bases are found on every continent, and the struggle against this scourge involves every religious community. It is for this reason that we must denounce the equation that is being made between terrorism and a given religion. It is unacceptable for certain media to perpetuate that equation in world opinion, thereby inciting hatred and exclusion. The war against terrorism must therefore be global and multidimensional in nature. It must be the subject of genuine cooperation among all peace- and justice-loving States, and it must take place within the most appropriate international framework, namely, the United Nations.

This worldwide struggle need not necessarily be military to be effective. It must go hand in hand with economic measures to end the poverty and injustice evident in our world. We must also act on the political and diplomatic level to settle crisis situations and to identify, try and punish those truly guilty of terrorist acts and their accomplices.

Not long after the holding of the Millennium Summit and the Durban Conference against racism, and just before the high-level International Conference on Financing for Development, scheduled for 2002, we must unfortunately once again deplore the injustice, poverty and suffering endured by the overwhelming majority of the world's peoples. In the course of our many international meetings, we have constantly said that the world needs more solidarity and that the wealthier countries must expand their financial efforts to contribute to the economic and social development of the neediest peoples. In saying that we are not asking for charity, but rather for realizing the legitimate right of those peoples to development. Alas, the real state of affairs falls far short of our hopes.

Poverty continues to grow in the world, and the future of the world's poor is undermined by the plight of their children. Hundreds of millions of those children work in inhuman conditions in order to survive. They are left to their miserable fate in the streets, subject to violence, drugs and prostitution, whose corollary is AIDS. The situation is all the more appalling given that, despite promises to reduce or cancel the debt of poor countries, that debt continues to grow, its burden hampering economic growth. At the same time, some financial speculators can make tens of billions of dollars in a single financial market transaction — 10, or even 20, times the amount of recent years' generous debt write-offs.

How can our world continue to profess respect for human rights while allowing those in the North and South who benefit from the global system that generates such poverty and all the injustices exacerbated by globalization? What meaning do human rights have for people who do not even have access to the basic right to feed themselves? Can we therefore continue to dream of a better world knowing that the rich countries are continuing to cut back their development assistance?

It is therefore inconceivable to us to hope to fight terrorism without the genuine solidarity of the rich countries with the neediest. Yes, in this troubled world in which the international community is threatened by major conflict, it would not be out of place to reaffirm our desire to see the emergence of genuine solidarity among peoples and nations in the form of sound and mutually advantageous cooperation in order to redress these injustices, which are, I stress, the main breeding grounds of terrorism.

In order to address all the challenges posed by this difficult world, my country, Chad, knows that it must rely above all on its own capacities if it is to occupy its rightful place in international life and to make its modest contribution to the building of a better world. That is the underlying message of the unrelenting struggle waged by President Idriss Deby since 1 December 1990 to establish a pluralistic democracy in Chad, the guarantee of sustainable development in peace and stability.

I wish to state today that my country recently reached a decisive stage in the consolidation of that pluralistic democracy through the presidential election of 20 May. That election, the second of its kind in the history of Chad, involved seven competing candidates and resulted in the election of Mr. Idriss Deby, the outgoing President, to a second five-year term. It took place in total transparency, as attested by national and international observers. Moreover, the Chadian Government attaches great importance to the legislative elections to be held in 2002, with the assistance of the international community.

On the economic level, since 1995 Chad has followed a recovery strategy intended to lay the basis for sustainable economic and social development. Thorough reforms have been undertaken to improve and stabilize public finance, to correct external imbalances and to launch lasting growth. These actions require an effective anti-poverty policy, with respect to which Chad, through me, expresses its gratitude to the international community for its support, in particular at the fourth Geneva round table of 1998 on the development of Chad and at the sectoral meeting and the mid-term review meeting of 2000.

Furthermore, following lengthy and heated discussion, the oil project has been finalized and is operating well. Chad is now vesting great hope in its effects and looks forward to using its resources to finance its poverty reduction strategy. In that regard, I would recall that, for the first time in the history of petroleum exploitation, legislation has been enacted to guarantee transparency in revenue management and to reserve a portion of the profit for local communities in the producing region and their future generations.

Along with these domestic efforts, Chad will continue to work tirelessly for subregional and regional integration in Africa. The challenges facing the modern world require all nations to pool their means and efforts in great economic, monetary and cultural groupings. Even if the international situation should become favourable and the industrialized countries should choose to heed the voice of Africa, we believe that it is up to Africans ourselves, first and foremost, to build our continent.

The launching in July 2001 in Lusaka of the process of establishing the organs of the African Union opened encouraging prospects for the achievement of the legitimate aspirations of the African peoples to peace, security and well-being in a much fairer world. The African peoples are convinced that only a genuine union will allow Africa to address its challenges and to

extricate itself from the economic stagnation and violence that plague it.

Civil war and violence of all sorts, generated by injustice and poverty, are found throughout the world and on every continent. Their proliferation and extent are deeply worrisome, especially since they are fuelled and perpetuated by certain countries that place their own interests above those of the peace and stability of nations. What can we say about the hesitation of certain countries to participate actively or morally in prevention, management, settlement or peacekeeping operations? In our opinion, it is equally unthinkable to seek to combat terrorism while allowing crises that feed it to persist.

With respect to such crises, allow me to refer to certain conflicts situations that are of particular concern to my country, Chad.

Central Africa, which in recent years has become a theatre of political and tribal tensions, has ultimately become aware of its situation in the international landscape. It has therefore resolutely committed itself on the path to ensuring the creation of improved security conditions. In that regard, we must commend the efforts of the international mediators and those statesmen who have personally and effectively contributed to defusing a number of hotbeds of tension in that part of the continent.

However, while we may welcome the restoration of peace in Congo Brazzaville, the same is not yet true in the Democratic Republic of the Congo, where, regrettably, war continues to claim innocent victims. We hope that the inter-Congolese dialogue begun in Addis Ababa will result in a peaceful settlement to that fratricidal conflict, which has gone on too long.

We also certainly welcome the stabilization of the situation in the Central African Republic, but recent events have revealed the precariousness of the situation. In this regard, Chad reaffirms through me that it will tolerate no destabilization of that fraternal country through its borders and will always do its utmost to promote understanding and concord among its Central African brothers. It also calls on the international community to assist that neighbouring country in the restoration of lasting peace.

In Burundi, although armed confrontations continue to occur, we welcome the establishment of a union Government and hail the tireless work done by President Nelson Mandela as facilitator to ensure that the current negotiation process leads to national peace and concord in the country.

As to Angola, the Government of the Republic of Chad reaffirms its support for the legitimate Government in its efforts to achieve peace and security.

In West Africa, the agreement on voluntary disarmament signed under the auspices of the United Nations Mission in Sierra Leone has yielded tangible results and is now the only proper course for resolving the crisis in that country. We encourage the Economic Community of West African States to continue to work to restore lasting pace to that subregion.

As to the Horn of Africa, Chad encourages any initiative on the part of the belligerent parties to bring about national reconciliation in Somalia on the basis of the Arta agreements. Likewise, the Chadian Government welcomes the observance of the ceasefire between Ethiopia and Eritrea, and exhorts these two fraternal countries to build peace along their common border. As to the embargo on Libya, Chad unreservedly supports its immediate lifting, without conditions and in full, because it unjustly penalizes the fraternal Libyan people.

In the Middle East, it is time for the tragedy of the Palestinian people, which has lasted for more than half a century, to be brought to a peaceful, fair and lasting conclusion. It is more urgent and necessary than ever for pressure of all kinds to be brought to bear on the State of Israel to induce it to fulfil the terms of the resolutions adopted by the Security Council on the Palestinian question, in particular resolutions 242 (1967) and 338 (1973). The credibility of the international community depends on the ability of the Palestinians to enjoy all their rights, including the right to an independent and sovereign State.

Turning to another injustice in the world, namely, the inhuman embargo imposed on Iraq, my Government calls for its immediate and unconditional lifting, because it no longer has any justification. As to the injustice committed by our Organization vis-à-vis the Republic of China on Taiwan, the time has come to set things right, in order to allow that country, whose human, economic and political weight is unquestioned, to occupy its legitimate place in the family of nations, which is to say in the United Nations, following its recent admission to the World Trade Organization, which we welcome.

On this solemn occasion, we cannot fail to refer to another undemocratic and unjust feature of the structures of our Organization. In this regard, I would like to recall in the strongest terms that Chad still adheres to the common African position on the restructuring of the United Nations, including the enlargement and reform of the Security Council, so as to ensure fair representation for all regions of the world.

Before I conclude, allow me to extend to you, Sir, the warm congratulations of the Chadian delegation on your well-deserved election to lead the fifty-sixth regular session of the General Assembly. I am convinced that your personal and professional qualities will guarantee the successful conduct of our work.

Allow me also to convey the sincere thanks of my delegation to your predecessor, Mr. Harri Holkeri, for the tact and wisdom with which he conducted the work of the previous session.

I wish lastly to convey the Republic of Chad's sincere congratulations to our brother Kofi Annan, Secretary-General of this Organization, on the renewed trust that the international community has just placed in him for a second term, and also on the Nobel Peace Prize that was awarded to him and to the United Nations. The dedication of the Secretary-General to the cause of peace, progress and development has been thoroughly demonstrated. We therefore wish to assure him of the support and encouragement of the Government of the Republic of Chad throughout his new term in office.

The President: I now call on His Excellency Mr. Naji Sabri, Minister for Foreign Affairs of Iraq.

Mr. Sabri (Iraq) (*spoke in Arabic*): I am glad to extend to you, Sir, my congratulations on your election to the presidency of the General Assembly at this important session. We are fully confident that you will guide its work to complete success. I am also pleased to congratulate the Secretary General, Mr. Kofi Annan, on his re-election to a second term of office.

This session of the General Assembly acquires special importance given that it is being held at a time when the international family is facing increasingly serious problems. The deterioration of the international political and economic environment has reached an alarming point, threatening the very core of the individual and collective security of the Member States and the future of humanity as a whole.

Instability in international relations has increased as a result of the unilateral management of international affairs on the basis of the law of brute force. There has been a proliferation of such phenomena as the unilateral use of force, infringement of international law and the Charter, political blackmail, blockades and violation of peoples' rights to determine their own political, economic and social choices. The suffering of the peoples of developing countries has increased as a result of the lack of economic and social development and the widespread tendencies among wealthy nations to impose their economic hegemony and technical and scientific blockades under the guise of globalization. Attempts are increasing to impose certain cultures on the peoples of the world, heaping scorn on their religious beliefs, creeds and political and social choices and preaching the clash of civilizations and the launching of new crusades.

It was in these circumstances that the events of 11 September took place in the United States, with all the ensuing suffering and victims. While we have offered our sincere condolences to the American people and the families of the innocent victims of these events, Iraq has expressed its hope that the United States will deal with these events in a spirit of wisdom and responsibility by undertaking a comprehensive review of its policies towards other peoples and States with a view to finding ways to ensure security, stability and peace for the people of the United States and for all the peoples of the world.

The United States, however, has once again resorted to the logic of brute force; hence its aggression against Afghanistan. Then came the use of biological materials in subversive operations, whose source, according to American authorities, is most likely to be found in the United States. All this was accompanied by Western media campaigns intended to kindle feelings of rancour, hatred and chauvinism and to stoke the fires of war and aggression in the world. This confirms that the present world order is extremely fragile and that the fires of any conflagration anywhere could spread to the whole world. Indeed, wide as it is, the world could be set on fire by a spark coming from the West. The world needs to save itself from falling into an abyss, to which it is being pushed by policies that have their roots in hubris, arrogance, injustice and

aggression. The world needs justice based on fairness; it should not use force on the basis of power and advantage. Perceiving the dangers to which the world is being exposed, our leader President Saddam Hussein of the Republic of Iraq has called for acting wisely and reasonably to spare humanity the scourges of vengeance, war, rancour and hatred. On 29 October 2001, he launched an initiative calling for the world to cooperate, on the basis of a global agreement, to rid itself of the burden and dangers of weapons of mass destruction, beginning with the huge arsenal of such weapons stockpiled primarily in the United States and secondarily in the Zionist entity. In his initiative, President Saddam Hussein emphasized that,

> "When the United States begins to divest itself of its weapons of mass destruction with the rest of the world following suit, the United States will find its way to the paths of wisdom. The world will treat it with respect and love after sensing the respect and love coming from it. The world, including the United States, will then have peace, rather than stand at the brink of the abyss."

From this rostrum we call for reason, wisdom and the rule of law to prevail over impetuosity, recklessness and the law of brute force. We stress the importance of proceeding with a comprehensive objective effort to rid the world of all weapons of mass destruction and to set up a just and equitable international order in which all can enjoy peace, security and prosperity. It is now clear that the current discriminatory theories of non-proliferation and the mindset of drawing a distinction between safe and unsafe possession of weapons of mass destruction will not lead to a lessening of the dangers to the world, but instead to the exact opposite.

Iraq has suffered and continues to suffer aggression and terrorism. Its leaders, officials and nationals have been subjected to numerous terrorist attempts on their lives. Its towns and villages have been the targets of many acts of terrorism at the hands of terrorist infiltrators coming from across the border, who are sponsored, trained, financed and armed within the framework of State terrorism.

The Iraqi nuclear reactor devoted to peaceful purposes was the target of a terrorist attack by warplanes of the Zionist entity in 1981. Iraq's towns and villages and economic, scientific and cultural facilities were also systematically targeted and destroyed in the course of the aggression launched by the United States and the United Kingdom and their allies in 1991 and in the five large-scale attacks that followed in 1993, 1996, 1998 and 2001. Furthermore, for 11 years now Iraq has suffered comprehensive sanctions that have deprived its people and that have so far claimed the lives of 1.6 million civilians, the majority of whom are children and the elderly. Both the aggression and the comprehensive sanctions constitute systematic State terrorism directed against an entire people.

The daily aggression launched by aircraft of the United States and the United Kingdom against Iraqi towns and villages within the so-called no-fly zones imposed by these two States on the basis of a unilateral and illegal decision taken in flagrant violation of the Charter of the United Nations and international law is also State terrorism. We must also mention the explosions carried out in certain Iraqi border areas by elements of mercenary infiltrators, who are financed, armed and harboured by certain States, including the United States, which openly spends tens of millions of dollars on mercenary bands for the purpose of carrying out terrorist operations in Iraq under the so-called Iraq Liberation Act. The term "terrorism" also applies to the use by the United States and the United Kingdom of more than 300 tons of depleted uranium ammunition against the people of Iraq in 1991. Through the ensuing toxic radiological effects, this has led to an increase in the number of embryonic deformities, a tenfold increase in cancer cases and pollution of the environment of the region for many generations to come.

All these and other acts that violate the principles of international law are acts of terrorism. In the face of these acts of terrorism and aggression, Iraq has made many sacrifices in defence of its sovereignty, independence, dignity and national choices. The brave people of Iraq are more determined today than at any time in the past. They take pride in and cherish their national leadership, holding fast to their sovereignty, dignity and national and regional interests, defending their independence and political choices and defying all the evil intentions that stand behind the aggression and acts of terrorism directed against them.

The fact that Iraq is a victim of international terrorism has made it one of the first countries to call for combating terrorism. Iraqi national legislation provides for harsher punishment for terrorist acts. Iraq has signed and ratified most international conventions

in force against terrorism. Iraq believes that, in order to confront international terrorism, including State terrorism, it is necessary to initiate, under the umbrella of the United Nations, an international effort to reach agreement on a definition of terrorism and on ways to combat it, in accordance with international law and the Charter of the United Nations.

Iraq is prepared to participate actively in such an international effort to combat terrorism in all its forms, whether perpetrated by individuals, groups or States. Here, it is necessary to emphasize the natural, inalienable right of all peoples to defend their sovereignty, independence and territorial integrity, as well as to struggle against all forms of terrorism, including foreign occupation, colonialist control and aggression in all its military and economic forms, intervention in the internal affairs of States and the instigation and financing of ethnic and religious conflicts among peoples of the world. All these rights are embodied in the Charter of the United Nations and international law.

In discussing the question of reforming the current unsound state of international relations, we must point out the need to reform international mechanisms, foremost among which is the Security Council, to which the Member States of the United Nations have entrusted the primary responsibility of maintaining international peace and security.

The practices of the Security Council, especially in the last 11 years, have made it clear that the Council is no longer true to its role as specified by the Charter; that it has become a tool for implementing the policies of one single State; and that it now stands as a glaring model practitioner of double standards. Suffice it to cite, as just one example among many, the fact that the comprehensive sanctions imposed by the Council on Iraq constitute a flagrant violation of the Charter and the mandate of the Council. This was admitted by the United Nations itself, as stated in the report entitled "The right to food", submitted under cover of the Secretary-General's note of 23 July 2001, in which the Special Rapporteur of the Commission on Human Rights on the right to food said:

> "There can be little doubt that subjecting the Iraqi people to a harsh economic embargo since 1991 has placed the United Nations in a clear violation of the obligation to respect the right to food of people in Iraq." (*A/56/210, para. 56*)

Likewise, the expert of the Subcommission on the Promotion and Protection of Human Rights had this to say on the subject in a report dated 21 June 2000:

> "The sanctions regime against Iraq is unequivocally illegal under existing international humanitarian law and human rights law. Some would go as far as making a charge of genocide." (*E/CN.4/Sub.2/2000/33, para. 71*)

We therefore call for a comprehensive reform of the Security Council that would lead to the expansion of its membership and to the reform of its methods of work, with specific reference to its decision-making process, so as to ensure full respect by the Council for the purposes and principles of the Charter and the principle of democracy in international relations.

It has also become necessary to establish a mechanism for judicial review that would rule on the legality and constitutionality of Security Council resolutions in order to ensure that they are consistent with the purposes and principles of the Charter of the United Nations and with international law. We believe that Member States should be able to resort to the International Court of Justice to appeal resolutions of the Security Council which these States consider as involving infringement on the principles of the Charter and international law.

Thus we will be able to remedy this flagrant deviation from all democratic, judicial and legal norms and principles in the work and mandate of the Security Council.

Pending the completion of the process of reforming the Security Council and of ensuring that it plays its role in conformity with the Charter, States Members of the United Nations should reconsider their authorization to the Council to act on their behalf in the maintenance of international peace and security, since the Council has abused that authorization. There is no more obvious case in this regard than that of the comprehensive sanctions imposed on Iraq. No just-thinking State can afford to remain a spectator when it sees the authorization it granted to the Security Council being used to annihilate the people of Iraq.

It is the legal and moral obligation of all States that respect international law and the Charter of the United Nations to declare that they are not parties to this crime and that they did not authorize the Security Council to kill the children of Iraq in their name. The

comprehensive sanctions imposed on Iraq have inflicted enormous damage on the interests of a considerable number of the countries of the world, and these countries are called upon to put a stop to these illegal acts and to restore their trade relations with Iraq, in implementation of Article 50 of the Charter.

The organized terrorism to which the people of Palestine are being subjected by the Zionist entity, the founder and primary source of terrorism, can be seen in the bombing of towns, villages, camps and Islamic and Christian houses of worship, as well as in political assassinations, imposition of collective punishments, occupation of Muslim holy sites, use of depleted uranium ammunitions and poison gases, bulldozing of farms and confiscation of lands.

This organized terrorism calls for a reaction on the part of the international community that is commensurate with the gravity of these genocidal practices against a whole people. Similarly, the systematic destruction to which the Afghan people are being subjected at the hands of the American military machine is an illegal unilateral use of force and should come to an end. I should like to refer here to the Secretary-General's 1999 annual report on the work of the Organization, in which he stated that

> "enforcement actions without Security Council authorization threaten the very core of the international security system founded on the Charter of the United Nations" (*A/54/1, para. 66*).

We demand an end to this interference in the internal affairs of Afghanistan. The Afghan people should be able to make their own political choices, in conformity with their national interests and without any external interference, under whatever pretext.

The United Nations was founded for the purpose of achieving security, peace and stability, so that social and economic progress for all peoples might be promoted by a number of means, including avoidance of wars and conflicts. But today two thirds of the population of the world suffer from underdevelopment and live in misery, while the few live in prosperity. What is required is to reactivate the role of the United Nations in the search for a balanced international economic policy that will lead to greater equality among peoples and States, lessen the intensity of political conflicts and feelings of frustration, engage all as partners in building the world economy, promote human rights and fundamental freedoms, and bring about a better life for peoples.

Efforts to reform the international political environment will not meet with success if they are not accompanied by efforts to reform the economic environment with a view to extending prosperity to all humankind. We must remember that the vast resources with which God Almighty has favoured our planet Earth are sufficient to enable us to achieve prosperity, security and stability for all. What we need is the conviction that all human beings are equal in terms of their worth, and we must work hard to avert, and put an end to, all policies and actions that violate this truth and cause upheavals in international relations.

The President: I give the floor to His Excellency Mr. Farouk Al-Shara, Minister for Foreign Affairs of the Syrian Arab Republic.

Mr. Al-Shara (Syrian Arab Republic) (*spoke in Arabic*): It gives me great pleasure to congratulate you, Sir, on your election to the presidency of this session. We are confident that the posts you held in your country and the respect you enjoy will facilitate your task in leading the deliberations of this session of the General Assembly to their desired objectives.

I would also like to express our appreciation to your predecessor, Mr. Harri Holkeri, for the efforts he made last year to lead the work of the previous session to a successful conclusion. Let me also congratulate Mr. Kofi Annan on his re-election to a second term as Secretary-General of our international Organization and on winning the Nobel Peace Prize, together with the United Nations. I would like to assure him that our cooperation with him will continue in order to consolidate the role of the United Nations in various domains.

The international and regional circumstances prevailing since the events of last September have cast a dark shadow on our work. The new world order, whose emergence was announced after the disintegration of the Soviet Union and the Gulf war, soon faltered, due to the failure or lack of desire to adopt the language of dialogue in order to eliminate hostile climates and the refusal to apply equal standards in international relations to resolve regional conflicts, and due to the adoption of the method of daily crisis management, which consists of addressing only surface issues, instead of delving deep into the root causes and addressing them according to the

criteria of justice, international legitimacy and human solidarity.

The world watched in disbelief the horrifying attacks on Washington, D.C., and New York. We in Syria and in the Arab world did not hesitate to denounce those attacks and to condemn them in the strongest possible terms. In the aftermath of those attacks, we also called for international cooperation under the auspices of the United Nations to uproot terrorism in all its forms. Likewise, we called for an agreement on measures to define terrorism in an effort to guarantee effectiveness in combating it and in addressing its root causes.

The phenomenon of terrorism is not confined to a particular society, culture or religion. It has appeared, and is still appearing, in many countries made up of numerous groups with different demands, beliefs and objectives. That is why it is a gross injustice and is totally unrealistic to link terrorism to Arabs and Muslims. Suffice it to mention, for example, a number of infamous terrorist organizations such as Bader-Meinhoff gang, in Germany, the Red Brigades, in Italy and Japan, and what has been taking place in Northern Ireland and in Spain, not to mention the various extremist organizations in the United States of America.

Those who link terrorist acts to Islam ignore the fact that Islam respects all monotheistic religions, calls for tolerance among their followers and prohibits the killing of innocents or acts of aggression against their properties. But the pressing question now is how to eliminate from the minds of American citizens the feeling of hatred against Arabs and Muslims, feelings promoted by tens of thousands of publications, articles and films for the last 50 years.

Senior officials at the highest level in the American Administration and in European countries have warned against linking terrorism to Arabs and Muslims and have issued positive statements. But, regrettably, those statements, though important, cannot erase the long history of defamation in books and films that have distorted the image of Arabs and remain in circulation. Moreover, we have recently heard that new films are being made, and books being prepared for publication, that incite feelings of hatred and link terrorism to Arabs and Muslims, thereby manipulating the tragic events of September.

Syria has always stressed the need to work on all levels to combat international terrorism in all its forms and in a way that is consistent with the principles and purposes of the Charter of the United Nations. Syria was the first country to call, in 1985, for the convening of an international conference under the auspices of the United Nations to define terrorism and to differentiate it from the struggle of peoples for national liberation. In response to a request by Syria, an item was listed on the agenda of the General Assembly, stressing the importance of determining the root causes of terrorism and taking appropriate measures to prevent it, combat it and address its root causes.

Syria has also called upon all countries to take the necessary measures at the national, regional and international levels to combat terrorism and implement the provisions of international law and relevant international resolutions, with the aim of preventing the perpetration of terrorist acts or their financing and inciting. We would also like to indicate that, since 1952, the Syrian Arab Republic has been one of the first countries to adopt firm national laws and legislation to combat terrorism.

International terrorism is not a new phenomenon. Syria and other Arab countries have also been victims of terrorism. For years we have called upon the international community to condemn all types of terrorism, especially the State terrorism practised by Israel. In this context, I would like to refer to the values of tolerance that have distinguished our region throughout history. Our region had never known the phenomenon of terrorism until after Israel was created on the basis of religion, in 1948, supported by the efforts of such well-known terrorist organizations as the Irgun, Tzioni, the Stern gang, the Lehy and the Haganah, which were responsible for sowing the seeds of terrorism and fear in Palestine and outside it.

Israel has invented new types of terrorist practices in order to continue its occupation of Arab territories. It expelled Palestinians from their homes and lands and perpetrated numerous massacres, beginning with the massacre of Deir Yassin in 1948, to that of Beit Reima just a few weeks ago. But despite that, it has not been held accountable for these crimes. The Palestinian people have, therefore, had no alternative in their struggle to rid themselves of their state of frustration, despair and international disregard for their plight but to start one uprising after another as

a way to liberate their lands from occupation and to restore their dignity like any other people in the world.

What is both odd and surprising is that whenever Palestinian refugees and their organizations residing in Syria are mentioned, the United States describes them as terrorist organizations and considers the country that hosts them as one that sponsors terrorism. It ignores the fact that Israel was completely responsible for uprooting those Palestinians from their homes, expelling them from their homeland and denying them, up until this very moment, their right of return in accordance with General Assembly resolution 194 (III). Regrettably, there are some countries and certain media outlets that believe those claims and describe those Palestinian organizations as terrorist. They do not stop there, but extend that allegation to Syria as well, instead of condemning Israel and expressing appreciation to Syria for hosting about 500,000 Palestinian refugees and offering them work, security and a dignified life.

But in any case the request on the part of Israel and those who support it to have these Palestinian refugees and their organizations expelled from Syria raises the very important question of where those refugees should go. The natural and human answer says that they should go back to their country, Palestine. They are more entitled to go back to their homes than the million Russian Jews who were brought in by Israel during the last 10 years. They are also more entitled than another 1 million Jews that the head of the Israeli Government plans to bring into Israel, although they live well and securely in their countries. Although the rulers of Israel claim that the Palestinians have no place in their towns and villages and that the return of Palestinians threatens the existence of Israel, the truth is that the return of Palestinian refugees will alleviate racism in Israel and will not threaten its existence.

During its invasion of Lebanon in 1982 Israel perpetrated the ugliest of crimes when it shelled and besieged Beirut for over 80 days, during which time thousands of innocent Lebanese civilians were killed, the infrastructure of Lebanon was destroyed and many horrific massacres were perpetrated. Those massacres included the atrocities at Sabra and Shatila, which the entire world witnessed and is aware of.

Faced with Israeli arrogance, the failure of the international community to stop Israel from perpetrating its crimes, and the provision of Israel with the latest American warplanes and the most destructive and sophisticated weapons, the Lebanese people had no choice but to stand fast and resist occupation. This resistance continued until it achieved its most important victory in May 2000, when it forced the Israeli occupying forces to abandon most Lebanese territories. No one in the world should forget that the battles of the Lebanese resistance were fought on the occupied territories of Lebanon against occupying Israeli soldiers and that this resistance did not act beyond Lebanese borders and did not hurt Israeli civilians during the 20 years of occupation, whereas the occupying Israeli forces killed thousands of Lebanese civilians, not to mention their repeated destruction of hundreds of houses and much of the Lebanese infrastructure.

After all this, how could anyone fail to distinguish between terrorism and resistance? Anyone wishing to target terrorism in our region must target Israeli terrorism first and foremost, because what Israel does is the utmost form of terrorism; it is absolutely bereft of human compassion. There is no alternative but to address the root causes of this terrorism once and for all and uproot it from our modern life through the implementation of international legitimacy in order to restore rights, end injustice and occupation and grant the Palestinian people the right to self-determination freely and wholly.

These days mark the tenth anniversary of the convening of the Madrid Peace Conference, for which we made sincere efforts so it would create an opening for a just and comprehensive peace in the Middle East. The serious and purposeful negotiations that Syria has engaged in during recent years have shown two things to the international community: first, that Israel neither desires nor is serious about achieving a just and comprehensive peace in accordance with United Nations resolutions; secondly, that Syria has the right to recover its territory in the Golan to the border of 4 June 1967, without compromise. However, we were always faced with Israel's intransigence, denial of rights, evasion of the real issues and of the requirements of peace. Indeed, Israel has done what its Prime Minister promised at the time: to make negotiations go in circles for 10 years, with all the dangerous repercussions and tragic results that would produce.

There is talk now about an opportunity for the resumption of the peace process according to the terms

of reference of the Madrid Conference. We believe that unless the two sponsors of the peace process, the European Union and the United Nations, make a serious effort to implement the relevant United Nations resolutions, this opportunity will be wasted again, with all the dangerous repercussions that will hold for this important and sensitive region of the world.

The dialogue among civilizations has gained increasing importance in the aftermath of the escalation of hostile attacks on certain cultures, religions and nationalities. Syria, which is the cradle of early civilizations and a source of scientific and intellectual enlightenment, recognizes the importance of this dialogue and the necessity of pursuing it in the service of humanity and future generations. Our region, at its pinnacle, was a lively example of dialogue and interaction among civilizations. Within its broad horizons, the civilizations of East and West met. Intellectuals, men of letters, scientists and philosophers from different parts of the world contributed to the formation of these civilizations. In this context we hope that the Global Agenda for Dialogue among Civilizations, recently adopted by the General Assembly, will be implemented. We find in this agenda a horizon that responds to the aspirations of people towards enriching the awareness of common human values among all peoples and deepening the spirit of understanding among them.

In conclusion, allow me to convey to you the gratitude of my country, Syria, and its President, Government and people for the precious trust and the great support that so many countries in the world expressed when they elected the Syrian Arab Republic to the Security Council. I would like to assure you that Syria shall remain, as it has always been, in the forefront of those who defend international legitimacy and the Charter of the United Nations and will make every possible effort during its membership on the Security Council to contribute to preserving international peace and security.

The President: I now call on His Excellency Mr. Vilayat Mukhtar ogly Guliyev, Minister for Foreign Affairs of Azerbaijan.

Mr. Guliyev (Azerbaijan): This session of the General Assembly is being held at a very difficult time for all of us. I congratulate you, Sir, on your unanimous election to the position of President of the fifty-sixth session of the General Assembly and I sincerely wish you all success in guiding the work of the session and would like to assure you of our full support.

Mr. Matturi (Sierra Leone), Vice-President, took the Chair.

Under the current circumstances, enhancement of the United Nations effectiveness becomes increasingly important, and in this regard, I would like to express our special gratitude to Mr. Harri Holkeri, whose activity as President of the fifty-fifth session of the General Assembly was an example of the commitment to the revitalization process of the Organization.

We regard the Nobel Peace Prize awarded to the United Nations and Mr. Kofi Annan as evidence of the international community's recognition of the special role played by the Organization and of the great service of its Secretary-General. Congratulating our Secretary-General, I would like to stress that we place special hope in him and to reiterate our support for his activities aimed at achieving those very objectives for the sake of which the United Nations was created.

The Millennium Summit identified challenges in the context of global development that can be addressed only through coordinated efforts by the entire international community within the United Nations system.

One year ago, nobody could have foreseen the tragedy that would befall all of us, a tragedy that has shown the depth of the abyss before which the world finds itself today. The dramatic events that struck the United States make it imperative for us to take a new look at the aspects of global development in the twenty-first century.

Threats and risks in the context of globalization acquire new scale and character, and the international community must change its approaches accordingly. Today, an attack against one of us is considered as an attack against all of us. Will this approach become universal?

Azerbaijan suffered from a series of horrific terrorist attacks that were part and parcel of the conflict imposed on Azerbaijan by neighbouring Armenia. Unfortunately, our warnings about the terrorist threat, as well as our appeals to the international community to join efforts in the fight against this evil, made from this very podium, went unheeded.

Terrorism is closely linked to aggressive separatism and other forms of extremism, as well as to organized crime, drug and arms trafficking and other illegal activities that literally flourish in conflict zones and that provide terrorist and separatist groups with financial resources. Terrorism and separatism get large-scale outside support from States and private structures alike. Response to these threats must not be selective. They can be eliminated only through adequate and comprehensive countermeasures undertaken on the basis of the principles and norms of international law against all those who use terror to achieve their goals, leaving them no nope of escaping unpunished. Nothing can justify terrorism. There should be no room for double standards, palliatives or narrow national interests.

We all have witnessed many manifestations of terrorism that have taken place in different regions of the world, under different slogans and covers. This fact by itself clearly shows that the phenomenon of terrorism is not associated with any particular religion. Hence, the fight against terrorism should not be a fight against a religion. We must take effective measures to reverse a dangerous trend of imprudent instigation to hostility between Islam and Christianity.

The legal, political, military and other actions taken today by the international coalition are not the only prerequisites for a successful fight against terrorism. It is necessary to redouble the efforts aimed at assisting and enabling the least developed countries in the process of their social and economic development to use the opportunities provided by globalization.

Unfortunately, in many regions of the world we still see violent conflicts that claim tens of thousands of lives and undermine the sovereignty, territorial integrity and security of States. One such example is the conflict between Armenia and Azerbaijan. Masking its claims to the Azerbaijani territory under the banner of the struggle for the self-determination of the Armenian population of the Nagorny-Karabakh region of the Republic of Azerbaijan, the Republic of Armenia has occupied this Azerbaijani territory, as well as seven adjacent regions of Azerbaijan, and has conducted ethnic cleansing on the occupied territory, which has resulted in the expulsion of 1 million Azerbaijanis from their homes.

My country has been waiting for eight years for the Security Council to take practical steps to implement the following four resolutions concerning the Armenian-Azerbaijani conflict: 822 (1993), 853 (1993), 874 (1993) and 884 (1993). The Council adopted these resolutions back in 1993 in order to take enforcement measures against the aggressor, in accordance with Chapter VII of the Charter.

Until now, mediation activities of the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE) Minsk Group, which is co-chaired by the United States, France and Russia, and which will be 10 years old next year, have not produced any results, so the tenth anniversary may turn out to be a sad one.

Armenia continues to violate the principles and norms of international law enshrined in the United Nations Charter and the OSCE Helsinki Final Act, and it ignores the provisions of the relevant Security Council resolutions and OSCE decisions. Rejecting this international legal basis for the settlement of the conflict, Armenia negotiates from the position of power and on the basis of fait accompli, trying to consolidate the results of its armed aggression and to annex a part of Azerbaijan territory.

Armenia states that there is a conflict between certain principles of international law, but there is not a conflict between those principles. The right of self-determination cannot be regarded as a right to forcible separation of a part of a State's territory and must not justify the violation of the principle of territorial integrity of States, in our case, that of the Republic of Azerbaijan. Indeed, the real conflict is between Armenia and international law, which prevents Armenia from realizing its claims to the territory of neighbouring States.

The international community should not choose the easiest course of action and should not recognize the right of the powerful. Instead, it must act in accordance with the established principles and norms of international law and the decisions of international organizations.

It is unacceptable to blame both sides for the deadlock in the negotiations, ignoring the differences between the compromises and concessions demanded of Azerbaijan, on the one hand, and those demanded of Armenia, on the other. The aggressor and the victim cannot be held equally responsible.

The Republic of Azerbaijan stands ready for a resolution of the conflict based on the principles of sovereignty, territorial integrity and the granting of self-governance to all the people of the Nagorny-Karabakh region within the Azerbaijani State. The Republic of Azerbaijan is prepared to provide safety and security for this region's population.

Azerbaijan is interested in a just and peaceful resolution of the conflict more than anybody else, and we will continue to undertake all the necessary steps to achieve tangible results. But our efforts alone are not enough. Expeditious settlement of the conflict should become one of the main priorities for the international community. There is no room for stop-gap measures and "wait-and-see" positions. The situation demands fundamental approaches and actions on everyone's part. We expect a very significant contribution from the co-Chairmen of the Minsk Conference at the highest level.

Azerbaijan, which for eight years has been hosting 1 million refugees and internally displaced persons, continues to face an acute humanitarian problem that will only be resolved completely by creating the conditions necessary for them to return to their homes as soon as possible. Crises in the neighbouring regions have created another problem for my country, which now has to deal with a significant number of refugees from other countries. Taking all these difficulties into consideration, we deem it necessary for the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) in Baku to continue its functions. Currently, Azerbaijan needs even greater UNHCR assistance, as well as assistance from other United Nations humanitarian agencies and donor countries. I would like to take this opportunity to express our sincere gratitude and appreciation to all of the aforementioned who have given their support and assistance.

We believe that in order to enhance the effectiveness and efficiency of United Nations activities in the area of the prevention of armed conflict, it is necessary to better monitor the implementation of Security Council decisions. To this end, we propose, for general consideration, that the Security Council adopt the practice of submitting to the General Assembly periodic reports on the implementation of the Council's decisions.

We deem it necessary to strengthen the capability of United Nations rapid deployment forces. The faster the international community can react to the outbreak or resumption of a conflict, the easier peace and justice will be restored.

Globalization should enable us to promote sustainable development and the integrity and stability of public administration systems, eliminate discrimination in economic activity and ensure prosperity for all peoples. Azerbaijan is contributing to moving this process forward. We are sparing no effort to restore the Great Silk Route, to create a Europe-Caucasus-Asia transport corridor and to develop deposits of hydrocarbons in the Caspian Sea basin and transport them to world markets. These projects are of paramount importance in terms of the free and sustainable development of States in several regions of the world. Furthermore, they will give impetus to transregional cooperation and will serve as a factor that determines global development.

The free exploitation of natural resources and their transportation to world markets is the inalienable right of a sovereign State. Azerbaijan calls upon all the Caspian Sea States to refrain from the use or threat of force in the Caspian Sea basin. The Caspian Sea must be a sea of peace and cooperation. Azerbaijan supports early agreement on the delimitation of the Caspian Sea on the basis of principles and norms of international law and established practice in the use of the Caspian Sea.

As a member of the group of landlocked countries, Azerbaijan needs assistance from the international community to develop its transport infrastructure in order to integrate it effectively into the global economy.

In its efforts to implement the concepts underlying transregional cooperation, Azerbaijan is taking a multi-track approach and working within the framework of a number of structures. One of them is GUUAM (Georgia, Ukraine, Uzbekistan, Azerbaijan and Moldova), an organization consisting of five newly independent States whose names form the acronym and whose economies are in transition. The States members of GUUAM, which celebrate the tenth anniversary of their independence this year, have confronted numerous challenges and threats during the difficult period of the formation and development of their statehood. Such threats have manifested themselves

most clearly during the periods of armed conflict which broke out in three of those five member States. GUUAM stands for the speedy, peaceful settlement of conflict based on the norms and principles of international law enshrined in the United Nations Charter, the Helsinki Final Act of the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE) and other relevant documents and decisions of the United Nations and OSCE.

Currently, the GUUAM member States, located in Europe, the Caucasus and Central Asia, are trying to achieve greater integration into the world economy and, to this end, are actively cooperating in creating multidirectional transport corridors and in ensuring their safety and security.

Within the framework of humanitarian cooperation, we regard as very promising a GUUAM initiative aimed at creating a Europe-Caucasus-Asia cultural corridor, which would promote cooperation in such areas as culture, science and education. Joint projects in the area of tourism will also have a significant role to play.

The United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) has actively assisted Azerbaijan in addressing the development issues it faces. At the same time, the Government of Azerbaijan is deeply concerned by the continuing decrease in the core resources of UNDP. Developing countries and economies in transition need a strong UNDP that is able to provide effective assistance in the most complex spheres of development. The Government of Azerbaijan calls upon donor countries to increase the financial base of official development assistance, both multilaterally and unilaterally. In distributing official development assistance special attention should be paid to the needs of African countries, the least developed countries, the small island States and the landlocked States.

Azerbaijan places a great deal of hope in the International Conference on Financing for Development and the World Summit on Sustainable Development, to be held in 2002. As a member of the Commission on Sustainable Development, Azerbaijan intends to make a constructive contribution to ensure the success of these important events and to promote the sustainable development of weak economies.

In conclusion, I would like to stress that we all bear a tremendous responsibility. Today as never before, we must act wisely and use our power and resources not to escalate hatred and violence, but to promote peace and justice, stability and the development of our fragile planet.

The Acting President: I now give the floor to His Excellency Mr. Tuliameni Kalomoh, Vice-Minister for Foreign Affairs, Information and Broadcasting of Namibia.

Mr. Kalomoh (Namibia): The fifty-sixth session of the General Assembly is no ordinary one. We are meeting in the aftermath of the despicable terrorist attacks on New York, the seat of the United Nations, Washington, D.C., and Pennsylvania. Once again, we express our deep condolences to the Government and the people of the United States. Our thoughts go out to the families of those who lost their loved ones in those tragic and horrific events of 11 September. Namibia reiterates its unreserved condemnation of these and all other terrorist attacks, wherever they occur.

In the same vein, we express our condolences to the families of those who perished in the American Airlines accident on 12 November. We also convey our condolences to the Government and the people of the Dominican Republic.

Namibia also expresses its heartfelt sympathy to the Government and the people of Algeria as they mourn the deaths of those killed by the violent storm and mudslides there. Our thoughts go out to their families.

I would like to congratulate Mr. Han Seung-soo on his unanimous election as President of the General Assembly at its fifty-sixth session and to assure him of Namibia's cooperation during his tenure. I would also like to congratulate his predecessor, His Excellency Mr. Harri Holkeri, for the skills he brought to the work of the General Assembly while presiding over the fifty-fifth session. Under his able leadership, we have made a firm beginning to the implementation of the Declaration of the Millennium Summit.

Our Secretary-General, Mr. Kofi Annan, and the United Nations have earned a place among the Nobel Peace Prize laureates. For this, as well as for his unanimous, early re-election, Namibia extends warm congratulations to the Secretary-General. This, indeed, is eloquent testimony to the universal respect and admiration he has earned from all Member States. We wish him well and assure him of our full support during his new term of office.

Today we face multiple challenges, some of which threaten the future existence of communities and nations. With the adoption of the historic Millennium Declaration, world leaders pledged their determination to address old as well as new obstacles hampering peace and security. A solemn commitment has thus been made to enhance social and economic prosperity for all people, thereby ensuring a better world.

Through the United Nations, and with strong political will, no challenge is insurmountable. The United Nations is the only international body capable of serving the interests of all nations. It is an effective consultative and organizational forum for world affairs, and it can create trust and confidence among nations. It can bring peace to war-torn areas and bring relief and development to people who need it most. When sufficiently funded, its programmes and mandates can help developing countries to meet the challenges of HIV/AIDS, malaria and other diseases threatening our populations.

It is therefore important that we, the Member States, reaffirm our commitment to continue to strengthen our Organization in order to effectively address the challenges of the new millennium. In this context, we reiterate our call for the reform and democratization of the Security Council. The Security Council must be transparent and equitably representative. Above all, it must be responsive and accountable to all States Members, on whose behalf it maintains international peace and security.

The outcome of the historic first Conference on Illicit Trade in Small Arms and Light Weapons in All Its Aspects, held in July 2001, marked an important first step and set achievable goals to address the problems associated with this scourge, at all levels. It will now require the combined efforts of the United Nations, Member States and relevant international and regional organizations to ensure that rapid progress is made to stop the proliferation of small arms and light weapons, which has wreaked havoc, especially on the African continent.

Terrorism has assumed an increasingly alarming globalized character. For some time now, the Movement of the Non-Aligned Countries has been calling for an international conference against terrorism. The time is now right for Member States to reach a consensus on such a conference. In this respect, I wish to point out that Namibia signed, on 10 November 2001, the International Convention for the Suppression of the Financing of Terrorism, and we call on others to do likewise.

At the 1990 World Summit for Children we made a collective commitment to put children first, take care of and educate them and protect them from harm, exploitation, war and abuse. Yet too many children in too many parts of the world are still deprived of a peaceful childhood. Let us seize the occasion of the twenty-seventh special session of the General Assembly, on children, to take effective measures to make the world fit for all our children.

The HIV/AIDS pandemic has reached catastrophic proportions. The Secretary-General reminded us that nearly 22 million people have died of HIV/AIDS and that out of more than 36 million people infected worldwide by HIV/AIDS, 25.3 million live in sub-Saharan Africa. Thus, if indeed we are to succeed in reversing the spread of HIV/AIDS by 2015, as world leaders committed themselves to doing in so many forums, then Governments, civil society and the private sector must, in strong partnership, tackle HIV/AIDS. In this connection, the establishment of the Global AIDS and Health Fund to combat the AIDS epidemic and other communicable diseases is a welcome initiative which calls for generous contributions.

The World Conference against Racism, Racial Discrimination, Xenophobia and Related Intolerance, held in Durban, South Africa, was the beginning of a process undertaken by the international community to address the inhuman and brutal treatment of the victims of the dehumanizing practice of slavery and colonialism, especially the African people. The trans-Atlantic slave trade and the colonization of the African peoples remain the darkest and most humiliating episode in the history of the African continent. The healing process will be enhanced only if and when those who committed and benefited from slavery and colonialism accept their full responsibility.

Namibia applauds the establishment of the International Criminal Court (ICC), designed to bring to justice those individuals accused of the most serious crimes of concern to the international community. Recently, the Southern African Development Community (SADC) adopted the Windhoek Plan of Action on ICC Ratification and Implementation, designed to promote early ratification of the ICC treaty.

Namibia is currently reviewing its national legislation to prepare for the ratification of the treaty.

The knowledge-based global economy has revolutionized the nature of trade, finance, employment, migration, the environment and social systems, as well as the concept and application of governance.

Namibia, like other countries of the South, expects tangible results from the International Conference on Financing for Development, to be held next year in Mexico. It is in the interest of North-South and South-South cooperation that additional options be explored to mobilize financing for development. Similarly, the fourth Ministerial Meeting of the World Trade Organization, in Doha, Qatar, could pave the way to an equitable international trading system that is mutually beneficial to all countries, provided that political will prevails.

The World Summit on Sustainable Development, to be held in Johannesburg, South Africa, next year should galvanize momentum for the full implementation of Agenda 21, in particular the principle of common but differentiated responsibility. Desertification, land erosion and land degradation should be given due and appropriate consideration.

Africa has recently taken an important step towards greater unity and cohesion with the transformation of the Organization of African Unity into the African Union. This momentous step would bring about closer integration of the continent and would make Africa more competitive in an increasingly global market. Furthermore, the heads of State and Government adopted the New African Initiative, now the New Partnership for Africa's Development, whose primary objective is the eradication of poverty through sustained economic growth and sustainable development. We call on the international community to support and assist African countries in the implementation of this New Partnership.

Let me stress that the initiatives undertaken by Japan, the People's Republic of China, the United States, under the third Tokyo International Conference on African Development, the China-Africa Forum and the African Growth and Opportunity Act respectively can complement the efforts of African countries for sustained economic growth.

We congratulate the people of East Timor on their struggle for independence and on conducting successful elections for their first Constituent Assembly. We commend the United Nations for its important role in East Timor. We wish the people of East Timor every success in the reconstruction and rehabilitation of their country. We call on the international community to be generous in its support of the East Timorese people in this most challenging phase of their nationhood.

The eleventh of November this year marks 26 years of the independence of the Republic of Angola. But for more than a quarter of a century, the people of Angola have endured a brutal and devastating war. They have suffered horrendous terrorist attacks against civilian targets, including most recently attacks on a passenger train, on school buses, the kidnapping of schoolchildren, attacks on hospitals and the wanton destruction of infrastructure; all at the hands of UNITA. Tens of thousands of innocent men, women and children have been killed. Their agricultural fields are infested with landmines. Angola has acquired the dubious distinction of having the largest number of amputees and the greatest number of landmines. This is not right; it cannot be right. These heinous atrocities committed by UNITA, as well as that group's consistent record of duplicity and always negotiating in bad faith, compelled SADC, in 1998, to declare Savimbi, UNITA's leader, a war criminal.

For its part, having determined convincingly that UNITA is responsible for the violations of the Lusaka Protocol and the resumption of the war, the United Nations Security Council imposed sanctions against UNITA. While sanctions have been effective in many important respects, more concrete measures need to be taken by Member States to strengthen them and make them even more effective. African countries have a bigger and special obligation in this regard. Sanctions must be tightened in those areas identified by the Monitoring Mechanism on Sanctions against UNITA, such as the freezing of UNITA assets and bank accounts and the closing down of UNITA representations abroad, which now operate under misleading and innocuous sounding appellations but which in fact continue to promote UNITA activities and advocate its wicked cause. The international community should respond more decisively to repeated defiance of Security Council resolutions by UNITA. By acting more resolutely against UNITA, the

international community will help end the prolonged suffering, tears and agony of the people of Angola.

Regarding the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Namibia is encouraged by the progress made in the implementation of the Lusaka Ceasefire Agreement. The ceasefire has been holding so far despite some violations and infringements, particularly in the eastern part of the country. The continued occupation by forces of aggression has created deplorable human suffering and large-scale human rights violations in the Democratic Republic of the Congo. Namibia, once again wishes to remind the Members of the United Nations that a cardinal principle of the Charter of this Organization has been violated with impunity, when some of its Members committed an act of naked aggression against the Democratic Republic of the Congo. It is even more deplorable when the aggressor countries are engaged in the ruthless exploitation and plundering of the natural resources of the Congo. We reiterate here that aggression should be rejected and condemned whenever and wherever it occurs. There should be no double standards when it comes to the violation of the principles of the Charter with regard to aggression. The international community should also assist the people of the Congo in the rehabilitation and reconstruction of their country.

Now it is time for the Security Council to implement its decisions without further delay and approve the personnel for phase III of the deployment of the United Nations Organization Mission in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (MONUC), taking fully into account the demands and requirements of that peacekeeping operation — the size of the country and the non-existence of the infrastructure. The United Nations and the international community cannot fail the people of the Congo this time around.

We are gratified by the increased efforts of the Security Council and the serious attention paid by the international community to Sierra Leone, which have now started to pay off. The international community should remain actively engaged and continue to assist with the peace-building and reconstruction of the peace-loving people of Sierra Leone.

History teaches us that no administrative Power has relinquished authority as a gesture of good will, that no peace process has been problem-free and that parties to a conflict, naturally, will have differences. This notwithstanding, however, no amount of difficulties can justify abandonment of the United Nations Settlement Plan for Western Sahara. Any attempt to legitimize, in whatever form or shape, the present situation in Western Sahara is unjustifiable and is a departure from the United Nations Declaration on decolonization and relevant General Assembly and Security Council resolutions. Ignoring the legitimate aspirations of the brave Sahrawi people will only delay durable peace in the region. A departure from the United Nations Settlement Plan will deny the Sahrawi people their inalienable right to self-determination and independence. Namibia will reject and will dissociate itself from any plan, informal or otherwise, to deny the Sahrawi people their legitimate right to express themselves through a free, fair and impartial referendum for self-determination.

No people can maintain peace and security or build its prosperity on the helplessness and abject misery of others, particularly their neighbours. The people of Palestine and, indeed, the international community are crying out for the establishment of the Palestinian State. They are crying out for peace between Palestine and the State of Israel. It is now time to heed this call. The legitimate right of the people of Palestine to self-determination and the establishment of an independent State of their own cannot be denied and cannot be compromised. A Palestinian State will be in the best interests of Israel, of security and peace, of the entire Middle East and of the whole world. The basis for a just and lasting peace in the Middle East remains Security Council resolutions 242 (1967) and 338 (1973).

Let us make sustained and determined collective efforts to promote peace and development in all corners of the world, so that our children and grandchildren can live in a peaceful world.

The Acting President: I give the floor to His Excellency Mr. Gediminas Šerkšnys, Chairman of the delegation of Lithuania.

Mr. Šerkšnys (Lithuania): Let me at the outset express our deepest condolences to the families of the victims of Monday's tragic accident in Queens, New York.

I am particularly pleased to see Mr. Han Seung-soo guiding the General Assembly during this session. I wish to assure him of my delegation's fullest support in all his endeavours. I would like also to extend my

congratulations to Mr. Kofi Annan on his election to a second term of office as Secretary-General.

It is also with great satisfaction that we join other speakers in congratulating Mr. Kofi Annan on having been awarded the Nobel Peace Prize. We are proud that the one hundredth Nobel Prize also honoured the United Nations as a whole. As rightly pointed out by the Secretary-General, this "challenges us to do more and to do better". It is our responsibility to ensure that the Organization is at the forefront of efforts to achieve peace and security in the world.

This year Lithuania is celebrating the tenth anniversary of its membership in the United Nations. On 17 September 1991, our nation proudly watched as the Lithuanian flag was raised for the first time at the United Nations.

In the 10 years that have elapsed, we have seen a rapid transformation in the world order. The world around us has shrunk with incredible speed. The benefits accruing from globalization have made us more dependent upon each other and thus more vulnerable to complex phenomena that affect the stability and security of our societies.

Terrorism does not recognize national borders. It spills over into international terrain, no matter how ingenious the defences are that have been put in place. Only through the common efforts of the international community will it be possible to create successful defence mechanisms. Indeed, on 11 September, the world grasped the sheer magnitude of the defences that will be required.

Terrorism is closely linked to extreme poverty, marginalization, human rights violations, ethnic strife, the proliferation of arms and drug trafficking. Thus, it is essential in the long term to devise and carry out an anti-terrorism policy that is inclusive and spans all regions and continents.

I wish to express once again from this rostrum my nation's strong condemnation of terrorist actions and to reaffirm our solidarity with the people of the United States. We are determined to stand alongside the international community in combating terrorism. In the immediate aftermath of the terrorist attacks, Lithuania supported the actions taken by the European Union and the North Atlantic Alliance, including the decision of the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) to invoke article 5 of the Washington Treaty. My Government has decided to grant permanent diplomatic clearance for the overflight and landing of United States Government aircraft.

An important step aimed at combating and preventing terrorism was the adoption of an unprecedented Security Council resolution: resolution 1373 (2001). Now it is up to Governments to act without delay in following through the detailed requirements of the resolution.

The General Assembly should also make its own contribution, first of all, by speeding up its work on the draft comprehensive convention on international terrorism.

Domestic legal steps to be taken by Member States include ratification of the 12 United Nations multilateral instruments directly designed for the suppression of terrorism. Lithuania has already stepped up its efforts to accede to the remaining five Conventions.

In this endeavour, the experience and practice of other international bodies in the fight against terrorism should not be forgotten. For instance, the Council of Europe has successfully elaborated a number of treaties, such as the European Convention on the Suppression of Terrorism, the European Convention on Extradition and its Protocols, and so on. The experience of this regional organization could also be used in the field of crime prevention, money-laundering and corruption. It is noteworthy that instruments of the European treaty system are also open to non-member States.

Just last week — meeting in Warsaw at a conference of heads of State of Central and Eastern Europe on the common fight against terrorism — 17 leaders from the region, including from my own country, adopted a declaration on cooperation in the combat against terrorism and a plan of action against terrorism. It is aimed at improving cooperation among intelligence, customs and police services and cracking down on money-laundering and drug trafficking.

The challenges posed by a globalized world are multifarious and interrelated. They require diverse and versatile actions. Therefore, due consideration and resources should be devoted to the problems of arms control and disarmament, as well as to poverty eradication and sustainable development.

In this regard, I would like to note the resolution adopted just a few weeks ago by the First Committee on multilateral cooperation in the area of disarmament and non-proliferation and on global efforts against terrorism. It puts a clear focus on multilateral efforts to combat international terrorism and fight proliferation.

The results of the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty (CTBT) article XIV Conference have rekindled the hope that widespread concerns about the delayed entry into force of the Treaty will be taken into account. We also hope that the implementation of the 13 steps agreed upon at the 2000 Review Conference of the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT) will not be put on hold. Likewise, intensive bilateral consultations between the United States and the Russian Federation on a new strategic framework will, it is hoped, foster a common understanding and provide a basis for deep reductions in all classes of nuclear weapons, consistent with the commitments under article VI of the NPT. Strengthening the Biological and Toxin Weapons Convention also remains an urgent priority.

The 2001 Conference on the Illicit Trade in Small Arms and Light Weapons in All Its Aspects has yielded a Programme of Action, a strategy and the political momentum to deal with the proliferation and misuse of small arms. There needs to be a follow-up process to tackle their brokering, marking and transportation and to build upon the measures agreed thus far. In the meantime, we believe that the strict implementation of the Programme of Action will bring about a real change at the end of the day.

History has proved that democratic, prosperous States provide the most favourable environment for human activities. The United Nations should therefore continue its efforts to promote democratization and sustainable development. I would also like to underscore the need to pay even greater attention to the promotion and protection of human rights.

Today we face the challenges of a globalized world, which are the result of rapidly developing technologies and human negligence. These challenges, although not as evident as open military conflicts, are no less threatening. A devastated and deteriorating environment could cause conflicts of an unprecedented scale.

No effort should be spared to free people from the dehumanizing conditions of extreme poverty. Assistance, new trade arrangements and debt relief should be complemented by firm commitments to poverty reduction, economic equality and measures to support education; they should be reflected first and foremost in the national policies of individual States and, at the same time, on the agendas of international organizations. In this regard, we commit ourselves to ensuring successful preparation for the International Conference on Financing for Development and the World Summit on Sustainable Development.

The Summit, in Johannesburg, should make concrete contributions to the eradication of poverty and the promotion of sustainable modes of production and consumption. In this regard, the Government of Lithuania, in its domestic policy, aims at economic development that does not harm the overall quality of the environment. Priority is given to promoting investment aimed at the prevention of pollution, the use of clean fuel and energy sources and the introduction of low-waste and other progressive environmental technologies.

The International Conference on Financing for Development should focus on better mobilization and more effective use of financial resources and find ways for more efficient cooperation between all development actors. The meeting will set strategic goals of policy coherence in order to integrate into the world economy countries with differing levels of economic development. The Bretton Woods institutions and the private sector should play important roles in the development process.

The events of 11 September have proved how fragile international security can be. Moreover, in defence of our common values — freedom, democracy and openness — no nation can idly stand by or act unilaterally. Every nation must pull its own weight in contributing to regional and international stability.

Strengthening dialogue and understanding among nations and civilizations should also remain in the forefront of our thinking. Better understanding and identified common values will foster trust and tolerance among people, preventing the spread of fanaticism, violence and terrorism. Lithuania made its contribution to these goals by hosting the International Conference on Dialogue among Civilizations in April this year.

It is of crucial importance to Lithuania to participate actively in international organizations and

to contribute to peacekeeping efforts. We have continued to provide our civilian police officers to United Nations peacekeeping operations through the United Nations Standby Arrangements System. Our troops have been serving in the Balkans since the very beginning of the international engagement in that region. Just a few days ago, a Lithuanian medical squad, a small, but much-needed contribution to the United Nations, was placed under the Standby Arrangements System. Shortly, Lithuania will submit its application for full-fledged membership in the United Nations Standby Forces High-Readiness Brigade.

Membership in the European Union and the North Atlantic Treaty Organization will solidify our region's institutional, economic and security ties. Lithuania is sparing no effort in preparing for the challenges of a unified pan-Atlantic family of democracies. The work of the Vilnius 10 group, initiated a few years ago and launched in Vilnius, is proof of the ability of the region's States to promote transparency, partnership and common values.

At the subregional level, Lithuania stresses practical cooperative efforts to promote democratic and economic transformation throughout the region. Over the last decade, our engagement with Poland has become a close partnership. Dynamic trilateral Baltic cooperation has become part of broader Baltic-Nordic cooperation. Excellent cross-border cooperation with the Kaliningrad region has given rise to many dynamic developments.

Just a couple of days ago, on 8 November, Lithuania assumed the chairmanship of the Committee of Ministers of the Council of Europe. The Council of Europe, based on the common values of pluralist democracy, human rights and the rule of law, already has a history of cooperation with the United Nations and its agencies, most notably in the field of human rights. Recent joint efforts by the United Nations, the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe and the Council of Europe to facilitate recovery of South-Eastern Europe have proved to be of the utmost significance for the people of the region, and have opened a new chapter of cooperation between these organizations.

During its chairmanship, Lithuania will seek to stimulate dialogue between the Council of Europe and the United Nations and its specialized agencies. We encourage a regular exchange of views on issues related to the fight against and prevention of terrorism, organized crime and money-laundering. Intensive coordination with regard to setting standards for pluralist democracy and respect for human rights will also be promoted.

In the work of the Council of Europe, the Lithuanian chairmanship will focus mainly on fighting terrorism, supporting the enlargement process of the Council of Europe, promoting regional cooperation and ensuring the effective functioning of the organization. With the aim of building a modern pan-European society, we will keep working to establish a wider European identity, sharing the best practices of the Council of Europe with other organizations and States, and strengthening the impact of the Council of Europe.

The Acting President: I call on His Excellency Mr. Alfred Carlot, Chairman of the delegation of the Republic of Vanuatu.

Mr. Carlot (Vanuatu): At the outset, I wish to extend to Mr. Han Seung-soo greetings from the Government and the people of the Republic of Vanuatu. I wish to convey to him the apologies of my Government for not being able to be represented here at the ministerial level owing to the fact that our Parliament is currently in session. I should also like to take this opportunity to convey my Government's congratulations to him on his election as President of the fifty-sixth session of the General Assembly. I also pay tribute to his predecessor, who so ably played a decisive role at the helm of the fifty-fifth session.

In addition, allow me to congratulate the Secretary-General, Mr. Kofi Annan, on his election to a second term at the head of this esteemed world body. His assured wisdom and compassion are needed now more than ever to lead this Organization.

I have the great honour, in standing before the Assembly today, to deliver a statement on behalf of my Government and the people of the Republic of Vanuatu at a time so sad that words cannot begin to convey the scope of our emotions. Let me express the sincere sympathy and condolences of my Government and the people of Vanuatu to the families and friends of the victims of the tragedy that struck downtown New York, Washington, D.C., and Pennsylvania. In light of these events, since the 11 September attacks, the General Assembly has been forced to suspend most of its

agenda, including this general debate among heads of State and Government.

It is ironic that as the world becomes more civilized, we become more vulnerable to such inhuman acts of terrorism. The impacts of these terrorist activities are being felt around the globe, and small States such as mine will suffer along with the rest of the international community. If any good has come out of the despicable events of 11 September, it is that nations the world over are more united than ever in condemning and collaborating to eradicate these terrible acts of terrorism. My Government has taken steps to tighten security and is working closely with other Pacific island States towards building and strengthening peace and security in our region.

Global peace and security cannot be certain in this climate of continued difference of views between major nuclear-weapon States. The lack of progress on this is reflected by the stalemate prevailing in the Conference on Disarmament. The agreements reached during the 2000 Review Conference of the Parties to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons were not realized; the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty has not entered into force; and global military expenditures continue to rise. More committed efforts and innovative strategies are needed to meet the goals of the Millennium Declaration. Vanuatu believes that the Conference on Disarmament should work towards that end.

The Third United Nations Conference on the Least Developed Countries, held in Brussels in May this year, was highly successful and produced the Brussels Declaration and the Programme of Action for Least Developed Countries for the Decade 2001-2010. We appreciate the view of the Secretary-General that the Declaration reaffirms the collective responsibility of the international community to uphold the principles of human dignity, equality and equity and to ensure that globalization becomes a positive force for all the world's people. We believe that without the coordinated involvement of the whole United Nations system, there will be little the United Nations can achieve.

The Government of Vanuatu, like other Governments around the world, is committed to enhancing the status of women. It is well documented that women in Vanuatu are disadvantaged in almost all sectors. In 1995, Vanuatu unanimously ratified the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women. Accordingly, the Government of Vanuatu is focusing on the Convention as the basis for programmes on women's rights and development in Vanuatu.

A lack of resources has hindered Vanuatu's progress in submitting its first two reports. The Government, however, recognizes the importance of the reports in terms of building up and monitoring its own human resources development requirements and is thus putting greater effort into the production of these reports. Indeed, no country can afford to waste half of its human resources.

Vanuatu remains steadfast in its commitments and obligations under the Convention on the Rights of the Child. Since ratifying the Convention in 1992, the Government of Vanuatu has implemented decisions and undertaken activities that promote the advancement of children in our society. A National Children's Committee, whose membership is made up of stakeholders, has been revived and is officially recognized as the regulatory body for coordinating and supervising children's rights throughout the nation.

The electoral assistance provided by the United Nations for Fiji's national election has greatly facilitated the democratic transition in that country. We welcome the new focus on supporting institutions and stimulating local participation. We also welcome other efforts to deploy the Electoral Assistance Division to coordinate the activities of foreign observers in forthcoming elections, particularly in East Timor and hopefully in Solomon Islands. We commend the United Nations for its assistance in empowering the citizens of Member States to enjoy the power of democracy.

We recognize the efforts of the United Nations in bridging the gap between human rights norms and their implementation. Despite some progress, challenges remain in ensuring universal respect for human rights. The Republic of Vanuatu is a party to nearly all core human rights treaties. We feel there is a continuing need for human and institutional capacity-building in developing countries in order to ensure the implementation of human rights conventions and treaties they have signed. This is an area where the United Nations should follow a needs-based approach and make a realistic assessment of the existing mechanisms.

The East Timorese people, who have already elected their Constituent Assembly, will democratically elect their President and soon exercise full sovereignty over their entire territory; this positive development is a big leap. It affirms the outstanding commitment of the Committee of 24 in deliberating on the right of peoples to self-determination. However, there are those who are still waiting to exercise this right. At this session's general debate, I am pleased to note that the report of the Secretary-General on the work of the Organization gives special mention to West Papua. The Secretary-General intends to enhance our efforts to assist Indonesia in seeking to establish a democratic society and in addressing the wide range of complex issues facing that country. The Secretary-General also underlined the efforts of the Indonesian authorities to further the promotion of human rights and find peaceful resolutions to the problems in West Papua, Aceh and Maluku. During the thirty-second Pacific Islands Forum in Nauru, Forum leaders expressed continuing concern about violence and loss of life in the Indonesian province of West Papua. The Forum also called on the Indonesian authorities to ensure to that the voices of all parties in West Papua be heard in order to achieve a peaceful resolution. Our leaders welcomed the recent presentation of special autonomy proposals to Indonesia's national assembly, while urging all parties to protect and uphold the human rights of all residents in West Papua.

I am extremely pleased to inform the Assembly that the Government of Vanuatu has agreed to host the Special Committee of 24 on decolonization seminar in Port Vila, Vanuatu, in May of next year. We look forward to that important meeting.

The Republic of Vanuatu wishes to join others in expressing our appreciation to the Secretary-General for his comprehensive report on the implementation of the recommendations of the Special Committee on Peacekeeping Operations and of the Panel on United Nations Peace Operations. Vanuatu is a new supporter of the United Nations peacekeeping role in East Timor and Bosnia and has contributed civilian police to these United Nations peacekeeping initiatives. The Vanuatu Government remains committed to future peacekeeping engagements. Vanuatu has also monitored the Bougainville peace process alongside the United Nations.

One of the more pressing issues before us is that of climate change and sea-level rise. The United Nations has now scheduled a World Summit on Sustainable Development, to be held in Johannesburg, South Africa, in September of next year.

The Pacific Islands Forum communiqué reflected on climate change in seeking the international community's awareness of our low-lying islands in the Pacific and reiterating the priority of the Kyoto Protocol as a significant step forward for global action in combating climate change. Although signed by many of the industrialized countries, including the United States, the Kyoto Protocol has not yet been ratified by many of them. We are very concerned that the United States Senate has actually voted against ratification.

Our Forum leaders noted the concerns expressed by most members over the United States intention not to ratify the Kyoto Protocol. We urge the United States to reconsider its position and to ratify the Kyoto Protocol as soon as possible.

While the incidence of HIV/AIDS is not as high in the Pacific as in some other regions, it is nevertheless a major issue for both developing and developed countries within our region. Vanuatu's delegation is of the firm view that prevention should be the mainstay of combating HIV/AIDS in our region.

The relatively low number of reported HIV/AIDS cases in a number of our countries should not give rise to complacency. Once the disease takes hold, care and treatment can be extremely expensive. In this respect, Vanuatu welcomes the establishment of a Global Fund to combat HIV/AIDS, and we wish to express our appreciation to those Governments, foundations and private companies that have already expressed support. Meanwhile, strategies and plans for resource mobilization must keep in mind the competing priorities of, and the constraints faced by, smaller States like Vanuatu.

In conclusion, the Vanuatu delegation reaffirms its support and conviction for the crucial role that the United Nations has in ensuring that the world becomes a much safer place in which to live.

The Acting President: I now call on His Excellency Mr. Ahmed Aboul Gheit, Chairman of the delegation of Egypt.

Mr. Aboul Gheit (Egypt) (*spoke in Arabic*): Allow me to read the statement that was to be delivered by the Minister for Foreign Affairs of the Arab

Republic of Egypt, Mr. Ahmed Maher El Sayed, who, unfortunately, was unable to come to New York to participate in this important debate.

"It gives me pleasure to express through you, Sir, to the friendly people of Korea, my most sincere congratulations on the confidence bestowed by the General Assembly upon President Han Seung-soo in his election as President of the current session. I would like to assure him of our full cooperation in ensuring the success of our work. With my personal knowledge of his abilities, experience and skills, I am fully confident that our efforts will be crowned with success through the activation of the Charter and the strengthening of its contribution to the building of a better world.

"We gather here under extremely sensitive circumstances born from injustice and violence. We must face them resolutely and boldly so as not to allow the forces of evil to overcome our aspirations, which cause us to gather here every year. Among the circumstances which I would like to highlight here today is, first, the continued denial of the legitimate rights of the Palestinian people, including their right to the establishment of their independent State on the territories occupied since June 1967, including East Jerusalem. The second circumstance I wish to mention is the harrowing events that took place in the United States as a result of criminal terrorist acts that took a heavy toll in innocent lives. Thirdly, peoples continue to suffer from violence, poverty, underdevelopment and injustice. We are duty-bound to stand united against these phenomena, because the oppression of one people is the oppression of all peoples, the killing of one soul is the same as killing the entire world, a child who goes to bed hungry spells hunger for the whole world and the demolition of a single home condemns the whole of humanity to sleep in the wilderness, deprived of the shelter of legitimacy and law.

"The events of 11 September in the United States were not the beginning of terrorism. We have been suffering from terrorism for many years. We stood alone in combating it and overcoming the obstacles placed by some, deliberately or unwittingly, in the path of our struggle, until it was vanquished. The tragic events of 11 September have brought the whole question into the sharp focus of international concern. This fact was reflected in a resolute international consensus to deal not only with the manifestations of terrorism but also with its root causes.

"There is a consensus to address terrorism within the framework of international law, as represented by this great Organization, through the use of a whole range of actions. These include legislation, laws, security measures and the dissemination of enlightened thought. There must also be a constant search for justice, truth and development. For the battle against terrorism to be successful, it must extend to all aspects of life, including the political, economic, social, cultural and security aspects.

"A search for the root causes is not a justification, rather, a diagnosis. A disease cannot be cured by dealing with the symptoms alone; there must, rather, be a thorough analysis and a thorough investigation of the germs that spew venom in human hearts, souls and bodies. Discovering the pathogen opens the path for effective treatment.

"No germ is more lethal to the future of humanity than that of poverty. We look forward to the forthcoming United Nations International Conference on Financing for Development to be held in Mexico; we hope that it will result in a new international consensus on an international economic framework serving the interests of all States, developed and developing alike. We also hope that it will create a new spirit of constructive partnership among all members of the international community. This partnership should seek to eliminate the imbalances of globalization, to maximize the opportunity for all to benefit from it and to achieve prosperity and political and economic stability.

"In this context, I would like to highlight the new initiative adopted by the African leaders at their recent summit in Lusaka to combat poverty and build a brighter future for the peoples of the continent — namely, the New Partnership for Africa's Development (NEPAD). This initiative reflects a clear vision of the spirit of our times and a recognition by the peoples of Africa

of the reality that they bear the primary responsibility for determining their future and for eliminating the political, social and economic obstacles standing before them. We look forward to the international community providing the necessary backing and support for this constructive collective action in order to ensure a successful outcome to the efforts aimed at the development, stability and prosperity in Africa.

"At the same time, it is important to prevent the spread of another disease: the so-called clash of civilizations and religions, which could undermine all of the progress made by humanity so far towards constructive interaction and coexistence. Therefore, we call for the convening of an international conference to lay the foundation for cooperation among all States against terrorism. The conference should define the obligations of States, from which there can be no deviation. It should chart the path towards the complete elimination of this scourge. It is anathema to the right of all peoples to live in an atmosphere of security, equality and justice that enables all to build the edifices of prosperity and progress.

"We also call for a genuine dialogue among civilizations that would turn diversity into a constructive force for mutual enrichment and deep enlightenment. Such dialogue should allow us all to avoid surrendering to the forces of barbarism, which wish to fabricate a clash or a conflict where there is none. There is but one single, unified march towards a better world. Differences will not disappear in that better world; what will disappear are the rejection, humiliation and persecution of others on the grounds of religion, race or gender.

"That is the true sense of globalization that we must uphold. It must be an expression of interdependence among the peoples and countries of the world and of the exchange of human and social experience and economic and technological potential. Globalization means dealing with the changing world in a spirit of understanding that does not attempt to impose or control — a spirit that does not claim absolute distinction or attempt to impose hegemony under any pretext. With this spirit, an all-encompassing democracy will emerge in international life. All States, big and small, will make their contribution to global advancement through their implementation of the principles adopted by the world after painful experience of war and disasters.

"This leads me to address a worrisome phenomenon that has grown stronger since the tragic events of 11 September: the attempt to associate the charges of terrorism and backwardness with Islam and the resultant persecution of Arabs and Muslims. This attempt can spring only from ignorance and blind prejudice. Islam is a religion based on truth, justice and respect for human rights, particularly the right to life and to be free from poverty, ignorance and disease. In Islam, people have the duty to interact with others through fair means, understanding and mutual respect.

"I commend those Governments, including the United States Government, that have taken measures to put an end to such heinous practices, which recall the dark ages. Nevertheless, we all need to do much more to reveal the truth and to dispel the darkness of ignorance and arrogance. All must know that human progress and knowledge are a river that has flowed ceaselessly since the dawn of history. Every civilization has been both a beneficiary and a tributary of the achievements of other cultures. The Arab Islamic, Christian and pharaonic civilizations have all made contributions that remain with us to this very day. Without those contributions, the world would not have been able to reach its current level of progress. Had it not been for those contributions, the backward forces of darkness would never have been reined in.

"I stand before this Assembly at the end of the first year of the third millennium, fully 10 years after the Madrid Conference which reaffirmed the basis for a settlement in the Middle East, and yet the Arab-Israeli conflict and the question of Palestine at its core still await a just and comprehensive settlement. That is truly hard to believe.

"It is most regrettable that the Syrian and Palestinian territories occupied in 1967 and parts of the territory of Lebanon continue to languish under the heavy yoke of Israeli occupation. That occupation continues to give rise to injustice,

destruction, frustration and anger. Israel continues to refuse to comply with the terms of international legitimacy. It continues to defy the will of the world. This unjust situation takes us directly back to the dark ages which the United Nations was established to end, and creates suffering and agony for a people whose only crime is to demand their rights. It also creates an unhealthy climate exploited by those who wish to fish in troubled waters in order to propagate darkness, misery, chaos and pain.

"The international and regional situations, in addition to the humanitarian and legal requirements and interests of all peoples, can no longer tolerate the continued occupation, usurpation and settlement by Israel of the territories of others. They can no longer brook an army of hateful occupation using the most sophisticated and lethal weapons to brutalize unarmed civilians, demolish their homes and uproot their trees. All these actions are undertaken under a false pretext that disguises the fact that this army is only defending the occupation of the land of another people — the people of Palestine.

"Similarly, the international situation can no longer bear the declaration by an occupying Power that it will not return the land it has seized and that, if it should return any, it will do so under unfair conditions. Equally untenable is its position that peace can only mean its hegemony and control in one form or another. The announcement by a Government of its official decision to resort to a policy of targeted killings is also unacceptable.

"Like all nations and peoples, Israel must understand that the world has changed. It must realize that it is in its own interest to comply with the international will. The only guarantee for the security of Israel and of the whole region is for Israel to put an end to its occupation, policies and practices and to coexist with the peoples of the region on the basis of equality, understanding and respect for international legality and the resolutions of the United Nations. Security cannot be achieved with continued occupation. Peace is incompatible with the doctrines of hegemony and superiority. Free cooperation alone can ensure prosperity for all.

"Sometimes I feel that, while the Arabs have accepted Israel's existence among them, Israel has not yet accepted the existence of a Palestinian people in the land of their ancestors, with the right to live in a sovereign, independent State with Arab Jerusalem as its capital. No Arab, Muslim or Christian can abandon their holy sites in Jerusalem. Those sites are constantly threatened by attempts to desecrate or destroy them by Israeli extremists, with the support of those ostensibly less extreme.

"A political settlement of the question of Palestine, the core of the Arab-Israeli conflict, requires the following.

"First, Israel must demonstrate its clear will to abandon its continued occupation of Arab lands as an alleged means to maintain its security. Israel needs to understand that its position in the Middle East will not improve in any real sense until it evinces the resolve to return to the borders of 4 June 1967.

"Secondly, Israel must realize that any peaceful settlement of the question of Palestine requires the return of East Jerusalem to Palestinian sovereignty. Failure to understand this fact will always be an obstacle to all peaceful efforts to establish peace in the Middle East.

"Thirdly, any political or security arrangements for the settlement of the Palestinian question must lead to the establishment of a viable Palestinian State exercising sovereignty over its land, water and airspace. There must be a just settlement, based on United Nations resolutions and the norms of justice and legitimacy, of the oldest refugee problem in modern history, namely, that of Palestinian refugees.

"Fourthly, Egypt does not accept a situation in which Israel remains the sole nuclear Power in the Middle East. The Middle East must be a zone free from weapons of mass destruction. The countries of the world, particularly the five nuclear-weapon States, must shoulder their responsibilities under international nuclear non-proliferation instruments.

"When such conditions prevail and are supported forcefully and decisively by the

world's nations — including the friends of Israel — because they are just and right, then the painful chapters of this long-lasting conflict can finally be closed. Only then will it be possible to raise new generations living in peace and tolerance instead of living in the frustration, violence and hatred that are born of illegal, unjust occupation.

"I cannot fail to refer to the central and important role of the United States of America in assisting the parties to reach a final and just settlement. Egypt looks with satisfaction to the resumption of the active role of the United States. In this regard, Egypt also welcomes the role of the European Union, the Russian Federation and the indispensable role of the United Nations in the establishment of a just, lasting and comprehensive peace in our region. Egypt will continue to play its role in support of the brotherly Palestinian people and on the side of justice, right and legitimacy.

"Our part of the world, located in the area from West Asia to the southern shores of the Mediterranean, requires peace in order to achieve the objective of social, economic and political development. To that end, a just settlement must be achieved quickly. Undoubtedly, the whole international community will support such a settlement, which will also require the presentation of a major and integrated economic programme that would provide the economic capabilities for unleashing the creative potential of the region, opening the door to constructive cooperation among all its peoples and nations, and helping it to overcome the tragedies it has lived through for more than a century.

"Perhaps time does not allow us to address all the problems facing the world. Suffice it for me to reaffirm that Egypt will always eagerly continue its efforts to uphold the noble principles that the Charter of this great Organization enshrines in a manner that serves the purposes and principles of all peoples. We assure the Assembly that we will continue our effective participation and enhance our active contribution to any collective action that guarantees to the United Nations the capacities and tools it needs to enable it to undertake the great responsibilities with which we the Member States have charged it, as well as to confront the multiple challenges imposed by the changing nature of our world."

The meeting rose at 1.20 p.m.